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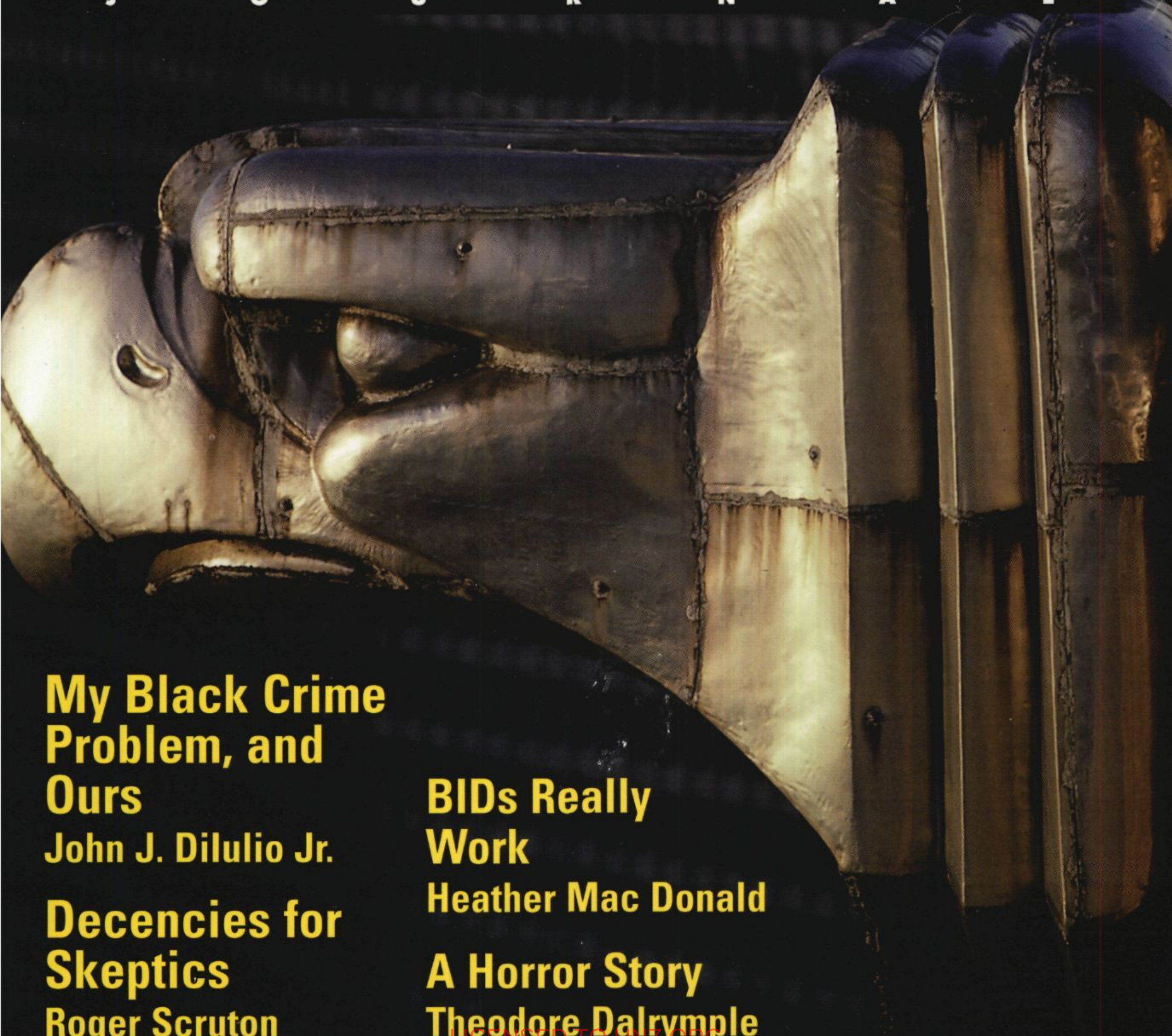

My Black Crime Problem, and Ours
John J. DiIulio Jr.

Decencies for Skeptics
Roger Scruton

BIDs Really Work
Heather Mac Donald

A Horror Story
Theodore Dalrymple

SAN AN
00

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SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

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CITY
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Contents

John J. DiIulio Jr. 14 **My Black Crime Problem, and Ours**
Why are so many blacks in prison? Is the criminal justice system racist? The answer is disquieting.

Heather Mac Donald 29 **BIDs Really Work**
Business improvement districts have used private-sector initiative to restore cleanliness and order to public spaces in cities across the nation. Success has earned them bitter enemies—especially in New York.

Roger Scruton 43 **Decencies for Skeptics**
Is religion necessary to make a moral society? No; but reverence is.

Kay S. Hymowitz 50 **J. Crew U.**
Colleges' glitzy advertising brochures promise a curriculum of boundless variety. And that's the problem: without a common body of knowledge, too many students are getting an empty education.

Kenneth Silber 58 **The Wasted Waterfront**
New York's vast, neglected shoreline was once central to the city's economic and cultural life. It could be again.

Edward L. Glaeser 70 **Why Economists Still Like Cities**
As the Information Age dawns, the dismal science has cheery news for urban America.

Urbanities

Rita Kramer 78 **Cathedrals of Commerce**

David Watkin 106 **A New Order for Office Buildings**

Departments

5 **In Prospect**

6 **Soundings**
Taking Back the Streets; Quota Faceoff; The Retail Boom; Kangaroo Traffic Court . . . and other matters.

Theodore Dalrymple 120 **Oh, to be in England**
A Horror Story

128 **Letters**

131 **Contributors**

Erin Isikoff 132 **New York Diarist**
Juror Dismissed

We'll let our readers tell you why they never miss an issue.

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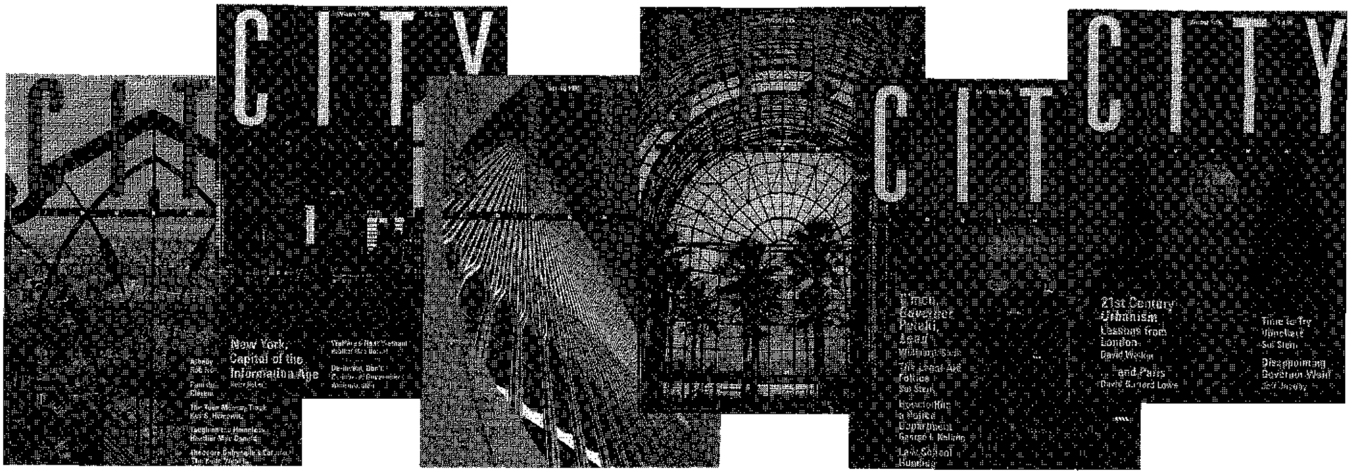


City Journal. Ideas that work.

In Prospect

What a challenge to our prevailing notions of human motivation is the news that Japanese women don't have out-of-wedlock children, simply because there is a social stigma against it. Yes, they can get generous welfare benefits for illegitimate kids, but they are not tempted by this "incentive," as U.S. policy analysts might call it—not even if they are poor. Their behavior arises not from economics but from shared beliefs about right and wrong.

If you ask what beliefs about right and wrong Americans share—and how they know what's right and why they do it—you step into one of our hottest national debates. Two extraordinary articles in this issue take opposed positions on these matters. Their disagreement is fruitful and suggestive, for it clarifies these fundamental questions—and what is at stake in how we resolve them.

Surveying the dispiriting data on lawlessness among black Americans, John J. DiIulio Jr., in "My Black Crime Problem, and Ours" (page 14), asks what can be done to curb this epidemic of law-breaking, whose principal victims are other black Americans. His answer: religion, as embodied by the black churches.

You don't have to be religious to see the force of this argument. After all, DiIulio observes, crime is a moral problem that requires a moral solution. It isn't the result of bad social conditions, of "root causes" like poverty, but of a spiritual vacuum within the criminal. It is a social problem that is really a personal problem: its solution isn't social change but a change of heart, a deep conviction that lawless behavior is wrong. What's needed is to awaken a conscience in each criminal, and what is better suited to the task than religion, long practiced in matters of sin and redemption?

As the French Revolution unfolded, Edmund Burke foresaw that the Jacobins, in systematically destroying religion, were laying waste to a key agency of social control: the majority of men do right because they believe in the absolute authority of God. Take away this inner belief, and only the power of the state, a much weaker authority, will enforce right doing.

In time, who will even know what right doing is? For without God, Nietzsche famously observed, everything is permitted. The moral sense vanishes along with moral authority. Without an Absolute, everything is relative and unfixed.

So one answer many Americans now give to the question of moral authority is a religious one. They've turned in revulsion from a sordid world without a moral beacon and chosen a religious certitude that banishes puzzlement about what the good is and why we must do it.

But what about the rest of us? In "Decencies for Skeptics" (page 43), Roger Scruton addresses that question: for secular people in a secular age, on what foundation does morality rest? On reason, an Enlightenment optimist would reply; but Scruton knows that the same reason that dissolved religious faith will eat through anything that tries to contain it. The relativism of today's political correctness is reason's way of dealing with moral absolutes. So, taking a tip from Burke, Scruton asks why should we not take Enlightenment reason on faith, as a belief we've inherited from our ancestors, along with all the other Enlightenment virtues we so value, the tolerant virtues of liberal democracy? When nihilistic political correctness tries to turn reason against these virtues, why not reject the very terms of the attack and say that we believe these things because they are an inheritance from our ancestors, who found that they worked, and we are thus loath to part with them?

Today's effort to keep the great works of Western literature and philosophy in the university curriculum rests on this same faith—though it's an uphill battle, as Kay S. Hymowitz's "J. Crew U." (page 50) makes clear. For in a secular age, what better guide do we have to what's right and wrong than the reflection of 3,000 years of thinkers on human experience—what works for mankind and what doesn't, what seems to make human life free and happy and noble and what leads to tyranny or degradation? We are not the first people to ask such questions, perhaps even not the wisest. ●

Soundings

Taking Back the Streets

Communities across Southern California have a new weapon in the struggle against crime. Acting on the complaints of fed-up citizens, local district attorneys are going to court and winning civil injunctions against gang activity. Police compile lists of local gang members' names; prosecutors take the gangsters to court, where they can tell the judge why they should not be included in the court order. The injunctions are tailored to the specific problems of each community. Some are designed to stop narcotics trade; others target partying, graffiti, or loud music. Most impose 10 PM curfews for gang members under 18 and allow police to stop anyone named in the injunctions who's on the street after midnight.

One order identified more than 30 members of Pasadena's Denver Lanes gang, who had effectively taken over a 12-square-block area. Residents were afraid to walk the streets and were forced to sleep on the floor for fear of random gunfire; gang members were even making residents pay to back out of their own driveways. The Pasadena injunction bars members from approaching passing pedestrians and cars, harassing drivers, and using beepers (which offer drug dealers mobility and the ability to warn others of approaching cops). The gang members are also forbidden to use rooftop lookouts, drink in public, or gamble. Violators face up to six months in jail and fines of up to $1,000.

Predictably, the NAACP and the ACLU are fighting the injunctions, calling them discriminatory and unconstitutional. It's an increasingly familiar story: liberal elites defending the disorderly, destructive few at the expense of ordinary residents of troubled neighborhoods. "When I see the ACLU and all opposing us, well, what about the civil liberties of the victims?" one 12-year resident of the area asked the *Los Angeles Times*. "The shooting has dropped down to nothing." The quality of life has improved as gangs have broken up, gone underground, or moved to the next town. So successful are these local crime-prevention projects that Governor Pete Wilson recently announced a $2.5 million program to help local communities cover the costs of filing injunctions.

By and large, gang members have complied with the court orders. In Norwalk, southeast of Los Angeles, cops have had to make only five arrests for violations. The genius of the approach is that it gives police and the community the ability to identify troublemakers publicly and hold them to account before their disorderly activity escalates into violence. Often police know exactly who the delinquents are: civil injunctions give them the power to act on that knowledge and reverse the degradation of a neighborhood before it's too late. —*Matthew Robinson*

RPA, RIP?

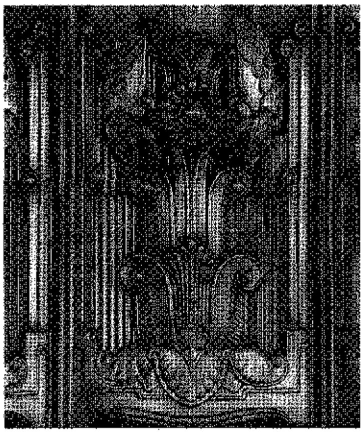
In February the venerable Regional Plan Association released, with some fanfare, its Third Regional Plan for the New York metropolitan area—a plan that misdiagnoses the region's problems and proposes "solutions" that are utterly wrongheaded.

The plan begins with the premise that the region as a whole—not just the older cities in it—faces a likely future of economic decline and no population growth. It foresees two other major risks: that the spread of urbanization into the region's watershed will endanger the water supply, and that today's social problems will get much worse. But the economic projections are surely too pessimistic, since they're little more than an extrapolation of the miserable economic performance since 1989. And if these projections are anywhere near correct, the RPA's environmental scenario is wildly implausible: a region with a declining economy will not see thousands of acres of farmland and forests torn up to build 3,500-square-foot houses and shopping malls, as the plan envisages.

In any case, the proposed remedies are ludicrously inadequate to the problems foreseen. RPA sees the economic problem as stemming from two deficiencies: inadequate transportation for commuters and a poorly trained workforce. Most observers rightly turned first to the transportation proposals, since the RPA's past work in transportation had been excellent and highly influential. Not so the new plan. Its most dramatic idea is to spend some $25 billion to connect the commuter railroads into a comprehensive "Regional Express" system. This system would do two things that the present commuter rail network does not—neither of them sensible. One is to link all the separate lines together, to serve the vast numbers—your fingers and toes will suffice to count them—commuting each day from one side of the region to the other: between Westport, Connecticut, say, and Metuchen, New Jersey.

The second is to permit workers to take the commuter trains directly to their offices, without changing to the subway. RPA's chief planner claims that this is the way things are in "every other major city in the world" with an extensive commuter rail system. Not so; not even in Paris, the city RPA takes as its model. RPA contends that the lack of commuter rail stations in lower Manhattan is the reason for the area's decline; it overlooks the economic characteristics of the area, notably its heavy dependence on declining employment sectors like government and commercial banks.

The plan is full of frivolous ideas, like its infatuation with the 42nd Street streetcar, which RPA contends would revitalize the entire midtown area (not exactly a wasteland today). More likely, it would be no more than a tourist attraction, like the Saint Charles streetcar line in New Orleans. Another such diversion is the suggested merger of the Port Authority and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. In fact, both are already large and cumbersome; many of their activities are strong candidates for privatization. Then there are all the architects' fantasies illustrated in the plan, like a pedestrian bridge across the East River in the 40s, depicted as a modern Florentine Ponte Vecchio!


ANDREW BORDWIN (4)

RPA's proposals for worker training, social services, and governance are vague and soft-edged. Generally, they entail spending more public money, not at all in tune with the world of 1996. Consider this recommendation on worker training: "RPA's workforce campaign calls for a mobilization of . . . leadership to scale up, coordinate, and sustain existing reform efforts . . . reconnecting work and education with a system of lifelong learning, connecting the region's new workforce to a changing labor market, and improving the physical connections between communities and employers." Stirs the blood, huh?

The first two regional plans, in 1929 and 1968, were truly pioneering works. The 1929 plan invented regional planning, introducing the very idea that urban economies can be studied and their futures forecast. It also proposed the elaborate system of highways, bridges, and tunnels that was built in the following 40 years. The 1968 plan anticipated that the economic future of large metropolitan regions in the Frost Belt would not be kind to old central cities. This was a revolution in thought, and it turned out to be right. The 1968 plan also contained a trenchant analysis of the problems with local zoning regulations and proposed improvements in the region's rail system, many of which were made in the 1970s and 1980s, with good results.

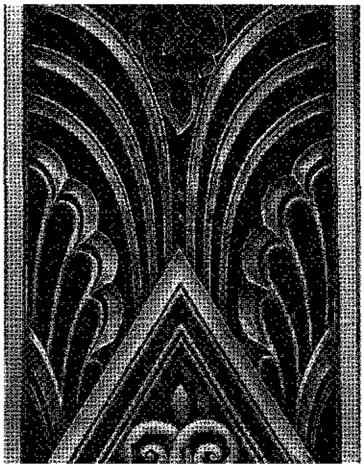
The RPA has a proud history. But there is a strong case for euthanasia among venerable civic organizations, given that the creation of new ones is so easy and the death of old ones so infrequent. For at least a decade, many policy wonks in New York have considered RPA a leading candidate for an honorable windup of its affairs. The Third Regional Plan clinches the case.

—*Dick Netzer*

Quota Faceoff

The battle over ending affirmative action has arrived in New York. In February the *New York Post* reported that Governor Pataki was reviewing the state's onerous affirmative action requirements for state employment. Within days State Comptroller H. Carl McCall fired off a letter warning that the state could expect a massive boycott by black-owned businesses and other organizations should Pataki revoke government affirmative action. McCall noted that Louisiana had tried a similar rash move but had backed down when a large black-owned communications company threatened to cancel a $75 million music festival in New Orleans. With the understatement of someone holding a pistol to your head, McCall suggested coolly that the "lesson learned in Louisiana should be grasped in New York State."

Comptroller McCall's complicity in the boycott threat, which had been relayed to him by the same black businessman who stopped Louisiana's quota repeal, is inappropriate for someone sworn to protect the state's fiscal health. Eliminating affirmative action in state hiring should be a top priority for any fiscal watchdog. The state's current quota regime, which Governor Cuomo established by executive order in 1983, is a relic of an era when compassion was measured in layers of bureaucracy. Cuomo's order authorized a cadre of full-time affirmative action officers and staff in each state agency, created two new advisory bodies, required individual agencies to prepare affirmative action plans and the advisory bodies to prepare two different sets of quarterly and annual progress reports, and called for sundry guidelines, remedial plans, studies, and reviews. The cost of this bureaucratic machine, never tallied, is undoubtedly enormous. Moreover, Cuomo's order mandates an impossible goal: a state workforce that mirrors the proportion of minorities, women, Vietnam veterans, and disabled people in the population—regardless of their availability or qualifications for state employment.



Governor Pataki should face down all boycott threats and end preferential hiring. Affirmative action has accomplished little beyond adding further bloat to an already oversized government. Taxpayers have a right to a government that uses merit, not race or sex, as the only qualification for employment.

—*Heather Mac Donald*

Off Course

Last fall my wife, an English teacher in a New York City public school, received a form letter from the Board of Education informing her that her teaching license would be terminated at year's end unless she completed six college-level credits in special education and two in "human relations." Never mind that she had already obtained a 36-credit master's degree from Columbia University, completed two stints as a student teacher, and passed national, state, and local licensing examinations.

Never mind, too, that she has almost no contact with special education students. She is now taking a course on special education, delving into such trendy topics as "handicapism as a social construction." And she was particularly bemused by the "human relations" requirement: surely she had demonstrated some understanding of human relations simply by surviving three years in the public school system. Of course, what the board actually has in mind is such politically correct courses as "Race and Multicultural

Education," "Racism and Sexism," and "Introduction to Black English."

No one can seriously believe that any of this is relevant to the reality of the public school classroom. But such courses are a cash cow for education schools that charge up to $600 per credit, the teachers' union that also gives courses that meet the board's requirements, and the special education empire that continues to expand. And they are a boon to the Board of Education bureaucrats who justify their existence by dreaming up zany licensing requirements and then monitoring and enforcing them.

Little wonder, then, that while the Board of Education is notoriously forgiving of a teacher's shortcomings in the classroom—no one ever loses his license for mere incompetence—it turns tough as nails when it comes to the arcane and often redundant teacher credentialing standards. The board's obsession with credentials turns education priorities upside down, devaluing excellence in the classroom and discouraging good teachers while rewarding mediocre time-servers as long as they satisfy irrelevant course requirements.

—Sol Stern

The Retail Boom

The struggle to civilize Manhattan has another enemy—retail institutions that find it necessary to pipe music onto the streets. Saks regularly broadcasts such noise in a misguided effort to enhance Fifth Avenue's atmosphere of material abundance. "It's not a campaign," a spokeswoman for Saks unconvincingly claims. "Sometimes we have music." Saks might very well want to discount its actions. The sound pressure level (SPL) of average street noise is already 70 SPL, with 45 to 85 SPL constituting the normal listening range. At what level must the sidewalk music be in order for it to be heard clearly above the average street discordance?

When Saks blares music onto the sidewalks, or when amplified billboard trucks blast music while cruising through the streets of midtown, hordes of pedestrians become involuntary customers. As Saks colonizes the pavement, it infringes on the liberty and privacy that public streets offer. New York offers its pedestrians vistas of pleasure where they can promenade, enjoying themselves for free. When the noncommercial urban landscape shrinks, the enjoyment of the street itself, the most basic urban amenity, also diminishes. Under the influence of Saks's music, determined pedestrians on the streets of New York City become passive shoppers in the mall of America. The theater of New York's streets becomes a stage-managed spectacle. Saks's musical revue intrudes on the real drama of our lives.

—Erin Isikoff

Kangaroo Traffic Court

If you've ever gotten a parking ticket in the Big Apple, you can sympathize with Herbert Walker. Between 1991 and 1993 he received four tickets; when he didn't pay, police impounded his Oldsmobile sedan. Walker, a pilot and retired air force officer, took the city to court. In the process he may succeed in restoring some fairness to the city's Parking Violations Bureau.

After the city impounded his car, Walker went before a PVB hearing officer. He told the officer that three of his citations were "phantom tickets," issued while he and his car were in New Jersey. He even offered flight logs that showed he was flying on the days in question. The city presented no evidence against him beyond the four tickets—but he still lost.

To attorney Michael S. Gruen, the situation sounded all too familiar. In 1977 Gruen had gotten a ticket he didn't feel he deserved, but the PVB made him pay the fine anyway. Gruen took the city to court and convinced a judge that the city wasn't giving him the presumption of innocence. That ruling meant that the city could no longer convict somebody based on a parking ticket alone if the defendant raised a "substantial defense." To win a conviction in such a case, the city would have to present enough evidence to meet its burden of proof. But two decades later, the PVB was still convicting motorists on the basis of no more than a ticket.

So Gruen took Walker's case. Soon the city fired the traffic enforcement officer who had issued three of Walker's tickets. It turned out the officer *was* writing phantom tickets. The city also reimbursed Walker for the cost of his bogus tickets and the impounding of his car. Walker and Gruen are fighting on, however, determined to change the way the city does business.

Trivial? Gruen sees a larger principle at stake. The PVB is where New Yorkers are most likely to encounter the legal system: in 1993 the city held 563,000 hearings over alleged parking violations. As Gruen argues, "The sheer volume of PVB adjudications makes it particularly important that the PVB comply with basic due process standards in order to sustain public faith in the justice system." —*Max Boot*

For Art's Sake

I love Roz Chast's cartoons; her scratchy drawings are intrinsically funny even before you get to the caption. But when she tries to put over a Message, you get the uneasy feeling that you are watching a champion badminton player serve a bowling ball. Her "Museum of Grant-Free Art" appeared in *The New Yorker* recently. Three paintings hang on a wall. The first shows various household cleansers in containers and, incorporated in the picture, a headline reading: "I don't know where I'd be without KLEENEE products." Then a man and wife, headlined "Thanks, Mom and Dad!" and a still-life with acknowledgments like "Fruit: Courtesy of Marvin's Corner Market." It would be an awfully vulgar world, Chast is hinting, without the National Endowment for the Arts.

Anti-NEA Republicans are a tempting mark, of course. "These boys and girls," writes *Time* art critic Robert Hughes of GOP freshmen in Congress, "aren't even cultural Neanderthals. They're Jurassic." That sort of attack is easily dismissed, being that it is (let's face it) just slightly overwrought. Chast, however, hits the nail on the head. Readers should be alert to two messages over and above the general point.

(1) Without the NEA it would be 1965 all over again, when the public was stuck with the sort of "artist" who was capable of getting people to support him *voluntarily*—Picasso, Matisse, Liberace. There wasn't a whole lot of difference back then between supporting art and buying frozen enchiladas at the A&P, except that (of course) only the very rich could take part. And you will recall how, in their crass rush to satisfy wealthy clients, the artists of that era produced nothing remotely comparable to the radical feminist art, excrement art, and wonderfully frank photographic explorations of unusual sexual practices that have blossomed now that American artists are free to please the public instead of a bunch of snotty rich people. It might also be worth reminding younger readers that, pre-NEA, artists who had yet to establish a reputation had to make art just because they wanted to. The facts were suppressed at the time, but we know today that this often resulted in gastric upset.

(2) The cartoon also reminds us that, so long as the taxpayers are buying, we needn't worry about artworks' being defaced by the sort of ghastly acknowledgment Chast rightly deplores. Nobody ever thanks the taxpayers for anything.

—*David Gelernter*

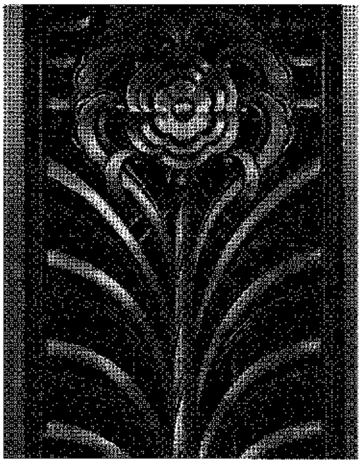
There They Go Again

The venality of Albany's political culture was on prominent display in February when the New York State Legislature, by an overwhelming margin, shamefully overrode Governor Pataki's veto of a bill to help New York City's police and firefighters win larger pay raises. The bill, now law, shifts jurisdiction over contract disputes from the city's Office of Collective Bargaining to the state's Public Employment Relations Board. Result: the city loses control over its dealings with its own employees. The state board is sure to be more generous, since it compares agreements with those of suburban police and fire departments rather than those of other city unions. Little wonder that Mayor Giuliani, who recognizes as much as anyone the sacrifice police and firemen make for the city, vigorously opposed the bill and urged Pataki's veto.

You might think that the liberal city Democrats who control the Assembly would oppose such a giveaway to cops at the city's expense. You might think that the Republicans who control the Senate would support a governor of their own party by upholding his veto. But in Albany, regional and party loyalty take a backseat to special-interest politics—and public employee unions are the state's most powerful interest by far. They spend millions on campaign contributions and lobbying and provide volunteer workers to get out the vote, leaving legislators of both parties beholden to them. What goes on in Albany is a far cry from the sort of representative democracy we read about in our high school civics books.
—*William J. Stern*

When Learning Comes Last

It's become a rite of passage for New York City schools chancellors: Rudy Crew has become the fourth chancellor to suspend the school board in the Bronx's Community School District 9 over allegations of corruption; he also suspended the board in nearby District 7, where a former assistant principal, to take just one example, said a board member asked her to pay him $18,000 for a principalship. Too many of the city's 32 local school boards—which each control as many as 500 jobs ranging from principals to crossing guards and budgets up to $140 million—have become fiefdoms for patronage and corruption, where learning is at best an afterthought. (See "Who Really Runs the Schools?" *City Journal*, Winter 1995.)



But the system's efforts to combat corruption haven't been very effective. Board members don't take the threat of investigation or suspension seriously. Little wonder: District 9, for instance, has been under investigation by one agency or another almost continuously since 1974, and suspended officials have routinely returned. "Even if the chancellor rules, you can go right to the court and get a restraining order," observed a District 27 board member when he learned that he was a target of an anticorruption probe.

Criminal prosecution isn't much of a deterrent, either. Veterans know that even if they're guilty, punishment will be light. The same District 27 board member, who eventually pled guilty to extortion, didn't spend a day behind bars. Even more appalling, convicted board members can run for reelection after three years—even if their crimes involved their board duties.

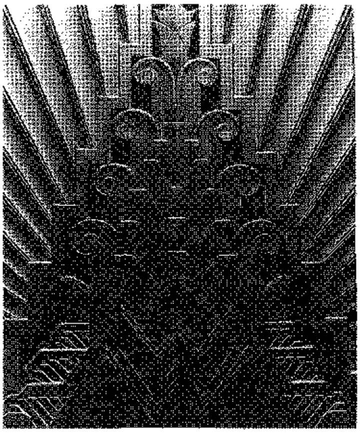
Corruption is an ever-present danger in a system that puts politics before learning. With turnout in school board elections averaging 7 percent, it doesn't take many votes to get elected, especially for a patronage boss. One recently suspended District 12 board member was reelected with only 238 votes. The State Assembly's school reform bill proposes abolishing local school boards. It's long past time to take this sensible step.
—*Lydia Segal*

An Unappealing Court

How undemocratic is New York State government? Consider: as Peter Reinharz reports ("The Court Criminals Love," *City Journal*, Winter 1996), the Court of Appeals, the state's highest tribunal, has extended protections to criminal defendants far beyond those the U.S. Supreme Court has recognized, paralyzing law enforcement and endangering ordinary citizens. Not only did New Yorkers never vote to approve such protections, but the language in the State Constitution on which the court bases its rulings is exactly the same as the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which guides the High Court in Washington.

Now Governor Pataki has proposed a legislative check on the court's judicial activism. The Police and Public Protection Act of 1996 would mandate that the Court of Appeals follow U.S. Supreme Court precedents in search-and-seizure cases. But this sensible reform may end up going nowhere, for it has to get past the State Assembly, where the views of the left-wing Legal Aid Society frequently hold sway. (See "The Legal Aid Society Follies," *City Journal*, Autumn 1995.) And even if the act becomes law, legal scholars have warned that the Court of Appeals—the very court it is designed to regulate—is likely to overturn it.

In response to Pataki's proposal and his criticism of the Court of Appeals, Associate Judge Vito Titone, who has led the court's rejection of U.S. Supreme Court standards, lashed out. "I defend my right to decide a case without fear of rotten tomatoes and eggs being thrown at me," Titone said. "Don't make every judge look over his shoulder after every decision. Don't make him ask, 'What did I do this time?'" Titone's discomfort isn't surprising. Judges are accustomed to enjoying the adulation of their peers as they extend new legal rights, without being held accountable to the public who must bear the brunt of those rights. Even if the governor's proposal proves doomed, he deserves credit for casting sunlight on an institution whose decisions have too often made New York a more dangerous place to live. —*James Taranto*



UnFairway

When Fairway opened a new 35,000-square-foot West Harlem supermarket in December 1995, Harlem residents, many of whom had been traveling to New Jersey to shop in discount supermarkets, welcomed its low prices and high-quality products. The store created 150 new jobs, two-thirds of which it filled with local residents.

So how did the New York City bureaucracy respond? It threatened to shut Fairway down. The store sits on land zoned for manufacturing, where the law permits a 35,000-square-foot wholesale grocer but not a retail grocer over 10,000 square feet. Because Fairway does both wholesale and retail business, the city's Buildings Department declared it was operating illegally and would have to restrict its retail operations to the allowable portion of the store unless it obtained a special permit, requiring lengthy public hearings. Fairway's owners balked. "If it comes to it," one told the *New York Times*, "there's 60,000 square feet of space over in New Jersey."

The store's plight became a cause célèbre, the subject of several newspaper and magazine articles—doubtless because Fairway's flagship store, on 74th Street and Broadway, is a favorite of journalists, politicians, lawyers, and other well-connected Manhattanites. Members of Manhattan's political establishment, including Borough President Ruth Messinger and Harlem City Councilman Adam Clayton Powell IV, rushed to Fairway's defense, urging the city to ignore its zoning regulations and save the jobs and the store for Harlem. In March, Buildings Department officials said they might work around the restrictions by classifying the supermarket as three separate stores.

All well and good, but what about other businesses in other neighborhoods that don't have friends in the Manhattan elite? In 1994, when the Buildings Department threatened to shut down Korea Town Plaza, a supermarket in downtown Flushing, it provoked little response from those who now defend Fairway. Korea Town was able to continue operating only after a protracted battle.

The Giuliani administration proposes to amend the city's zoning regulations to allow retailers of up to 200,000 square feet in manufacturing zones without any special permits. Current rules, established in 1974 in a futile effort to stop the flight of manufacturers from the city, have instead rendered many areas economic wastelands. Fairway's champions should recognize the broader lesson that irrational regulations all too often drive businesses and jobs out of New York City. —*Andrew J. Cowin*

Albany's New Deck Chairs

New York State, ranking near the bottom nationally in education measures such as dropout rates and SAT scores, urgently needs to join the national debate about reforms like charter schools, vouchers, and privatization that would challenge the monopoly of the education establishment that has presided over such failure. But legislative leaders from both parties seem determined to protect that establishment's interests.

Not that Albany hasn't been churning out education bills. So many competing proposals for restructuring New York City's education system are floating around that the media and the public have trouble keeping track of all of them. The most prominent proposal, the Assembly Democrats' "bold, comprehensive" plan (as Speaker Sheldon Silver's press release puts it), merely adds more deck chairs to the school system's sinking ship. The already unwieldy seven-member Board of Education would give way to a 19-member board, and each school would have a council composed of four teachers, four parents, one administrator, one other school employee, and one member appointed by the borough president. These councils would be powerless to change centrally mandated work rules and regulations that protect bad teachers and constrain good ones.

Senate Republicans, meanwhile, have introduced three bills on city school governance. One, sponsored by Senator Guy Velella of the Bronx, would give the mayor authority over the schools. Senator John Marchi of Staten Island has two bills, one that would essentially allow Staten Island to run its own education system, another that would eliminate the central Board of Education and replace it with five separate boards, one for each borough—achieving Staten Island's independence in another way.

All the proposals claim the mantle of reform, yet all are preoccupied with who runs the monopoly system that controls over 100,000 jobs. Each plan has been shaped by the needs of local political machines and special interests, especially the teachers' union. Not one fundamentally challenges the dysfunctional system by subjecting it to competitive pressures that would force it to improve.

But another, little noticed education bill languishes in committee. Introduced in January by a small group of conservative legislators led by Republican Senator Serphin Maltese of Queens and Democratic Assemblyman Dov Hikind of Brooklyn, it would offer vouchers redeemable at private or public schools to every child in the city. The bill clearly tries to do too much too fast: starting with an experimental program of vouchers for low-income children trapped in failing schools is a more promising approach, both practically and politically. Yet the Maltese-Hikind bill recognizes a crucial principle: real choice must be part of the education debate. Unless leaders on both sides of the aisle begin thinking about how to serve children rather than special interests, New York's schools will fall even further behind. —*Sol Stern*

My Black Crime Problem, and Ours

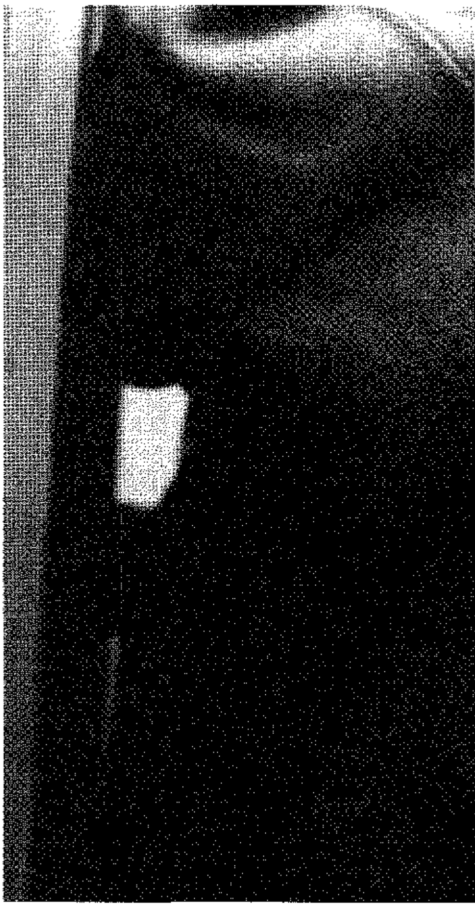
John J. DiIulio Jr.

Violent crime is down in New York and many other cities, but there are two big reasons to keep the champagne corked. One is that murder, rape, robbery, and assault remain at historic highs: the streets of Manhattan, like those of Houston, Philadelphia, Detroit, Chicago, and Los Angeles, remain much less safe today than in the 1950s and 1960s. Worse, though policing and prison policies matter, nothing affects crime rates more than the number of young males in the population—and by the year 2010, there will be about 4.5 million more males age 17 or under than there were in 1990: 8 percent more whites and 26 percent more blacks. Since around 6 percent of young males turn out to be career criminals, according to the historical data, this increase will put an estimated 270,000 more young predators on the streets than in 1990, coming at us in waves over the next two decades. Numerous studies show that each succeeding generation of young male criminals commits about three times as much serious crime as the one before it: the occasional fatal knife fight of 1950s street gangs has given way to the frequent drive-by shootings of 1990s gangs.

The second reason to keep the champagne corked is that not only is the number of young black criminals likely to surge, but also the black crime rate, both black-on-black and black-on-white, is increasing, so that as many as half of these juvenile super-predators could be young black males. But just when we need to think most earnestly about black crime, the space for honest discourse about race and crime is shrinking. The evidence of that shrinkage is everywhere: in the lickety-split O. J. verdict and its racially polarized aftermath, in the utter certitude of many blacks that the justice system is rigged against them, in the belief of many whites that violent crime is synonymous with black crime and the fear they feel of every young black male passerby not wearing a tie or handcuffs.

What has made our views on race and crime so polarized—and often so out of touch with reality? What *are* the facts about race and crime? And what are Americans, blacks and whites together, to do about it?

Many blacks, and some whites, believe that the justice system is biased against blacks, at worst purposefully racist or even "genocidal." Take a recent *New Yorker* article, in which Henry Louis Gates Jr., leader of Harvard University's black studies program, chronicled "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Man,"



Why are so many blacks in prison? Is the criminal justice system racist? The answer is disquieting.

JIM TYNAN/IMPACT VISUALS

namely, the acquitted O. J. Simpson. Gates writes: "Perhaps you didn't know that Liz Claiborne appeared on *Oprah* and said she didn't design her clothes for black women—that their hips were too wide. Perhaps you didn't know that the soft drink Tropical Fantasy is manufactured by the Ku Klux Klan and contains a special ingredient to sterilize black men. . . . Perhaps you didn't know these things but a good many black Americans think they do. . . . Never mind that Liz Claiborne has never appeared on *Oprah*, [or] that the beleaguered Brooklyn [soft drink] company has gone as far as to make an FDA assay of its ingredients. . . . If you wonder why blacks seem particularly susceptible to rumors and conspiracy theories, you might take a look at a history in which the official story was a poor guide to anything that mattered much, and in which rumor sometimes verged on the truth. Heard the one about the L.A. cop who hated interracial couples, fantasized about making a bonfire of black bodies, and boasted of planting evidence?"

Gates, like the renowned sociologist William Julius Wilson, one of the prominent black Americans whose views of the O. J. verdict he cites, was convinced that O. J. was guilty. But he recounts a story Wilson told him about once being stopped near a small New England town by a policeman who wanted to know what he was doing in those parts: "There's a moving violation that many African-Americans know as DWB: Driving While Black," notes Gates. As "older blacks like to repeat," when "white folks say 'justice,' they mean 'just us.'" In other words, blacks really do experience enough casual, reflexive racism from law enforcement officers to make them understandably fearful that racism permeates the criminal justice system.

A point well taken. But then Gates's article goes astray: it never makes plain that, in spite of these reasonable anxieties and resentments, some ways of "looking at a black man"—at any man—are right and reasonable while others are wrong and malicious. Some of the people who burst into jubilation over the O. J. verdict were celebrating the release of a man whom they believed to be innocent. With due regard for the fact that two families have lost loved ones, that's okay. But other blacks partied to a he-killed-the-blonde-and-got-away-with-it tune. For example, a sign held by a woman whose picture appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* read: "Guilty or Not We Love You O. J." Gates quotes film director Spike Lee as follows: "A lot of black folks said, 'Man, O. J. is *bad*, you know. This is the first brother in the history of the world who got away with murder of white folks, and a blonde, blue-eyed woman at that.'" Lee, Gates reports, "wasn't happy" at the verdict. But some black folks were thrilled—and for morally indefensible reasons that Gates needs to condemn, not artfully explain.

Nevertheless, the ambivalence and mistrust that many blacks feel toward the justice system is a social reality that whites can't ignore. *The Weekly Standard*'s deputy editor, John Podhoretz, wrote in the magazine about the O. J. verdict and race relations under the double-meaning heading "Yes, We Do Understand": "How can most black Americans believe (or say they believe) that O. J. Simpson is innocent of a crime science tells us there is a one-in-a-billion chance he did not commit? . . . We—that is, we upper-middle-class whites—must, by a process of study and observation, come to *understand*. And it will be 'white' institutions, from the Ford Foundation to the *New York Times* to America's corporations, that will insist on fostering this *understanding*. . . . For the American liberal establishment, this has become the stock response after a public outrage that divides Americans by color. . . . Is black America so lost in its own resentment . . . that they feel closer kinship to a killer because of his skin color than to the killer's victims? I can understand how this has happened, but it makes me sick."

Like Gates, Podhoretz never arrives at the right moral point. The point is that to *understand* is neither to forgive any criminal his crime nor to sit still when "racism" is used as an all-purpose excuse for morally abhorrent or socially pathological behavior. Like Podhoretz, I have little patience with liberal elites of whatever color who are nothing better than well-funded nihilists. I could not care less about understanding what they have to say, and I would not be the least bit concerned—if they were the only ones saying it.

But they aren't. All of us, "upper-middle-class whites" included, are morally required to understand and ponder what so many black folks have to say—not only the knee-jerk liberal pundits and politicians, but also world-class professors (like Wilson), plumbers, postal workers, paramedics, prosecutors, preachers, and (in my case) former students. Many of them are saying that they feel the justice system is as much a foe as a friend. As I will summarize below, I find almost nothing in the empirical research literature on racial disparities in sentencing to justify their fears and frustrations. But that does not mean their fears and frustrations are without any sort of empirical basis, including the kind that, for most of us, counts more than any other—our own lived experiences and those of our family and friends.

As Gates recalls, Norman Podhoretz, the father of John Podhoretz and until recently the editor of *Commentary*, wrote a famous soul-searching 1963 essay, "My Negro Problem, and Ours." Gates describes the essay as "one of the frankest accounts we have of liberalism and race resentment," a plainspoken tale of "a Brooklyn boyhood spent under the shadow of carefree, cruel Negro assailants, and of the author's residual unease when he passes groups of blacks in his Upper West Side neighborhood." In one key passage, the elder Podhoretz noted: "I know now, as I did not know when I was a child, that power is on my side, that the police are working for me and not for them."

But I knew. Growing up in rough-edged, white-ethnic, working-class neighborhoods of Philadelphia in the 1960s and 1970s, I knew—as all the kids I grew up with knew—that when push literally came to shove, the police would be "working for me and not for them." Each morning on my way to high school, I stood by myself at a bus stop, surrounded mainly by black teenagers from adjacent neighborhoods. I was by myself, but I was not alone. I knew that the cop in the cruiser was looking out for me in case "they" started trouble that I could not handle.

My old neighborhood had its biracial, but strictly segregated, parks and playgrounds. When interracial fights did break out, everyone ran when the cops came. But we white boys knew that if we got caught and showed due deference to the officers (*never* mouth off to a panting cop), we'd get lectured, get our hair pulled, or (at most) get our fathers called. We also knew the black boys would get that and worse—slapped, clubbed, and maybe arrested.

Once when I was unloading 100-pound flour bags at a downtown pizzeria where I worked, the cops came zooming up the sidewalk, got out of their cruiser, and pushed my pal and co-worker, Willie Brown, against the wall. They did not touch me. Willie, an illiterate black man then in his forties, had done nothing. I protested, and the cops sped off as quickly as they had come: "Sorry, kid, we got a call that somebody was stealing." But the only "somebody" they grabbed was the black man, and the only apology they issued was to the white boy.

I recall the second time my father, a retired deputy sheriff, ran a citywide race for sheriff and appointed me his manager (mainly to teach me something about politics before I "bought whatever they think they know about it at Harvard"). He ran on a real rainbow-coalition ticket with former deputy mayor Charles Bowser, Philly's first major black mayoral candidate. We lost the election (no surprise) as well as good relations with some neighbors (sad surprise), one of whom loudly scolded me that "we'll never be safe from crime if *they're* in charge of it."

Even though I am now a card-carrying elite professor and "upper-middle-class white," I have stayed close to home. I hang out with the same white working-class relatives and friends I've known all my life. I live a few minutes by car from some of Philadelphia's worst black neighborhoods. So I have a very different perspective from that of most white intellectuals, both on the white ethnics who turn into the cops blacks fear and on the everyday reality of life in black communities. And as little as the white policy elites, liberal or conservative, know about "the black experience," believe me, they know less about what race means in the lives of those Italian-American bricklayers, Irish-American gas pumpers, and Polish-American salesclerks whom the U.S. Census bureaucrats have baptized "non-Hispanic whites." We need to understand these folks, too—and especially how their experience of black-white relations leaves a tangle of powerful contradictions and ambivalences, as I know vividly from my own experience.

The ambivalence and mistrust that many blacks feel toward the justice system is a social reality that whites can't ignore.

I indelibly remember taking a jump shot on the playground when I was ten. As the ball left my hand, instead of invoking, for luck, the name of a white star (as was customary), I unthinkingly shouted the name of a black star. "Nigger lover!"

snapped a scandalized playmate. But the following week, the same kid punched out a white schoolyard bully for bothering a black girl who wandered by. I'll never forget how much, when my frail grandmother got kicked, punched, and robbed in broad daylight for the third time (on her way to church, no less), the fact that her assailants were (once again) black boys got under my white skin. The memory of the anger is still there—along with the image of her in her hospital bed, imploring her strapping grandsons, some of us cops, to "love all God's people."

So it's no mystery to me that blacks tense when they see a white cop coming: they know the Willie Brown experience well enough, and how could they possibly know the sense of justice regardless of race, even the Christian *caritas* transcending race, that can lie beneath the blue uniform and the white skin? Just that white ambivalence is as familiar territory to me as it was to Norman Podhoretz. I grew up with it; I know that casual racism is there; I know the anger and shame you feel at seeing it all around you—and I know the competing anger, no less familiar: the anger at the knowledge that when real violence erupts, all too often the assailants are (once again) black.

Honest blacks know this, too. In a recent issue of *The New Republic*, Boston University economist Glenn Loury writes of inner-city black communities: "'What manner of people are you who live like this?' The question is unavoidable. . . . It does no good to say that these are a minority of black persons; that there are good and sufficient reasons for their troubling behaviors; that others, who are not black, have also fallen short." Of middle-class blacks, he admits: "We are afraid to go into these communities. We do not recognize these kids as us; the distance is great and difficult to bridge."

My black crime problem, and ours, is that for most Americans, especially for average white Americans, the distance is not merely great but almost unfathomable, the fear is enormous and largely justifiable, and the black kids who inspire the fear seem not merely unrecognizable but alien. Not that we can't understand where they come from, when we stop to consider. After all, the child is father to the man: and think how many inner-city black children are without parents, relatives, neighbors, teachers, coaches, or clergymen to teach them right from wrong, give them loving and consistent discipline, show them the moral and material value of hard work and study, and bring them to cherish the self-respect that comes only from respecting the life, liberty, and property of others. Think how many black children grow up where parents neglect and abuse them, where other adults and teenagers harass and harm them, where drug dealers exploit them. Not surprisingly, in return for the favor, some of these children kill, rape, maim, and steal without remorse. And around goes the negative feedback loop: reasonable fear feeds unreasonable white race hostility, whose reality in turn feeds unreasonable black paranoia about the justice system.

Is there anything social science research can do to help dispel all the ambivalence and confusion crowding around the subject of race and crime? At least it can tell the truth, as the data disclose it, about the reality of black crime and black punishment. The bottom line of most of the best research is that America's justice system is *not* racist, not anymore, not as it undoubtedly was only a generation ago—in spite of the Driving While Black experience. If blacks are overrepresented in the ranks of the imprisoned, it is because blacks are overrepresented in the criminal ranks—and the violent criminal ranks, at that. Yes, there are ways in which the justice system is failing all Americans, including black Americans. But to the extent that the justice system hurts, rather than helps, blacks more than it does whites, it is not by incarcerating a "disproportionate" number of young black men. Rather, it is by ignoring poor black victims and letting convicted violent and repeat black criminals, both adult and juvenile, continue to victimize and demoralize the black communities that suffer most of their depredations.

Consider the data. A 1993 study of the racial impact of federal sentencing guidelines found that the imposition between 1986 and 1990 of stiffer penalties for drug offenders, especially cocaine traffickers, did not result in racially disparate sentences. The amount of the drug sold, the seriousness of the offender's prior criminal history, whether weapons were involved, and other such valid characteristics of criminals and their crimes accounted for *all* the observed interracial variations in prison sentences.

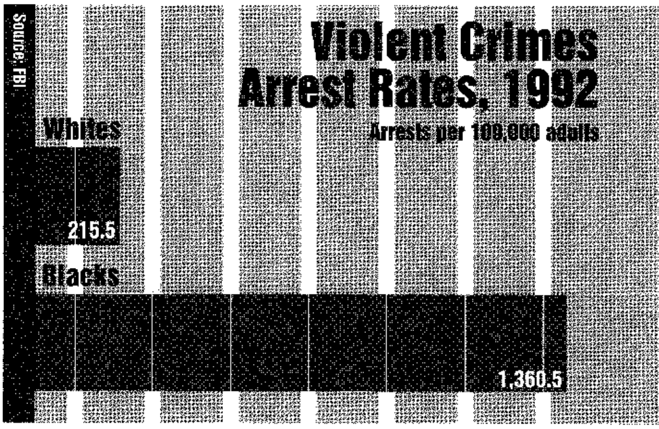
Similarly, a 1991 RAND Corporation study of adult robbery and burglary defendants in 14 large U.S. cities found that a defendant's race or ethnic group bore almost no relation to conviction rates, sentencing severity, or other key measures. In 1995, federal government statistician Patrick A. Langan analyzed data on 42,500 defendants in the nation's 75 largest counties and found "no evidence that, in the places where blacks in the United States have most of their contacts with the justice system, that system treats them more harshly than whites."

A 1985 study by Langan of black-white differentials in imprisonment rates demonstrated that "even if racism exists, it might explain only a small part of the gap between the 11 percent black representation in the United States adult population and the now nearly 50 percent black representation among persons entering state prisons each year in the United States." An otherwise typically liberal-leaning 1993 National Academy of Sciences study voiced the same basic conclusion.

It is often asserted that the 1980s war on drugs resulted in a more racially "disproportionate" prison population. The data tell a different story. In 1980, 46.6 percent of state prisoners and 34.4 percent of federal prisoners were black; by 1990, 48.9 percent of state prisoners and 31.4 percent of federal prisoners were black. In 1988, the median time served in confinement by black violent offenders was 25 months, versus 24 months for their white counterparts. The mean sentence lengths were 116 months for blacks and 110 for whites, while the mean times actually served in confinement were 37 months for blacks, 33 months for whites. These small differences are explained by the fact that black violent crimes are generally more serious than white ones (aggravated rather than simple assaults, weapon-related crimes rather than weaponless ones).

CHARTS BY MONICA KOWARICK

Indeed, the evidence on the race-neutrality of incarceration decisions is now so compelling that even topflight criminologists who rail against the anti-drug regime, mandatory sentencing laws, three-strikes laws, and other policies with which they disagree are nonetheless careful to contend that racial biases are "built into the law," are "America's dirty little secret," or constitute "malign neglect." In other words, they do everything but challenge the proposition that blacks and whites who do the same crimes and have similar criminal records are now handled by the system in the same ways.



Source: FBI

In this vein, liberal experts contend that the penalties for crack cocaine possession and sale are excessive compared with powder cocaine penalties. I concur. And liberals are also right that blacks are far more likely than whites to use and sell crack instead of powder cocaine. But they go badly wrong on two key counts. First, they feed the conspiratorial myth that federal anti-crack penalties were born of a white conspiracy led by right-wing Republicans. Go check the *Congressional Record*: in 1986, when the federal crack law was debated, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) supported it, and some CBC members pressed for even harsher penalties. A few years earlier it was CBC members and other Democrats in Congress who pushed President Reagan, against his considered judgment, to create the Office of National Drug Control Policy (better known as the drug czar's office). And it was President Clinton who recently refused in no uncertain terms to change the federal penalty structure for drug crimes.

Second, liberal experts and advocates of drug legalization cloud the facts about who really goes to prison for drug crimes. As I and several other researchers have concluded, society gets little return on its investment in locking up low-level offenders who possess or even traffic in small amounts of drugs and commit no other crimes. But most drug offenders, both those behind bars and those who have served their time, do *not* fit that description.

As a recent study funded by the National Institute of Justice and other federal agencies acknowledged, in "an important sense the label 'drug offender' is a misnomer." Few "drug offenders" are in prison for mere possession. In 1991, for example, only 2 percent of the 36,648 persons admitted to federal prisons were in for drug possession. Moreover, as for imprisoned drug *traffickers*, most have long and diversified criminal records—only their latest and most serious conviction offense is a drug-trafficking offense. Even in the much-maligned federal system, few convicted drug traffickers, whether they handle crack, powder cocaine, or pot, are black college kids or white white-collar types arrested on the interstate by a state trooper who found a small stash under the driver's seat. The average quantity of drugs involved in federal cocaine trafficking cases is 183 pounds, while the average for marijuana traffickers is 3.5 tons.

In an ongoing study of who really goes to prison in Wisconsin, George Mitchell and I are examining the complete criminal records, adult and juvenile, of a randomly selected sample of imprisoned felons from Milwaukee County. We are finding that the imprisoned "drug offenders," black and white, like most of the rest of the sample, have committed many times more property, drug, and violent crimes than the latest entries on their prison rap sheets would indicate. This is not to mention all the crimes swept completely under the official-records rug by plea bargaining, or all the wholly undetected, unprosecuted, and unpunished crimes the prisoners have committed while free.

Of course, there are cases of truly petty drug dealers, black and white, being hit with long, hard time. But such cases are the exception that proves the rule, and the rule is that the system is neither harsh nor racist in dealing with "drug offenders" or other criminals.

Some experts will come *almost* to the point of agreement with all that, but still will insist that the system is anything but color-blind when it comes to two important tasks: punishing juveniles and dishing out death sentences. But here, too, the evidence does more to exonerate than to indict the system.

Out of hundreds of post-1969 studies of minorities in the juvenile justice system, barely two dozen offer evidence of any pattern of racial discrimination. Even so, liberal strongholds like the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)—which made a cavalierly fragmentary and outdated examination of only 46 of the 250 relevant studies—continue to purvey the myth that young black offenders are treated more severely than young white ones. Notwithstanding OJJDP and its race-baiting minions, the truth is not that the juvenile system is racist, or that the states incarcerate too many minority juvenile offenders—or, indeed, too many juvenile offenders of whatever background.

Rather, as the National District Attorneys Association and other law enforcement officials have said for years, the juvenile system is an even worse revolving door than the adult system. For example, in 1991 fewer than 20,000 male juvenile violent offenders were in public juvenile facilities—but in 1992 alone there were more than 110,000 juvenile arrests for violent crimes, and more than 1.6 million juvenile arrests for other crimes. In most states, police, prosecutors, and judges do not even have complete access to juvenile records, and some states still forbid fingerprinting juveniles, including kids charged with weapons offenses that would be grade-A felonies if committed by adults.

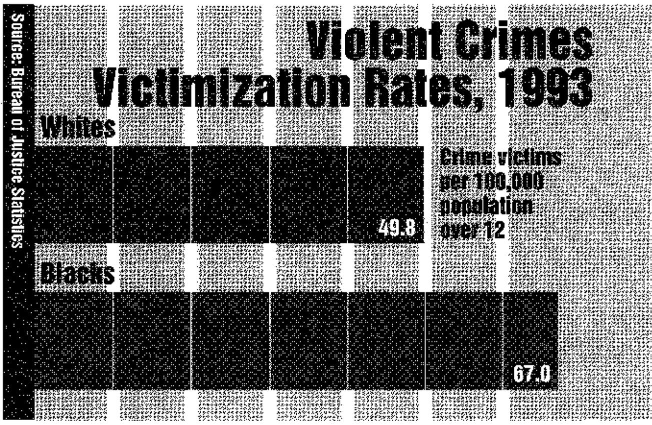
Over the coming decade, juvenile arrests in California and many other states are projected to increase by some 25 percent, even more for minority juveniles. By the year 2005 we will probably have 200,000 convicted juvenile criminals, half of them black males, in secure confinement, including adult prisons and jails—over three times more than the number of incarcerated juveniles today. The reason for this will not be racism or what OJJDP calls "disproportionate minority confinement." The reason will be that more black boys grew up without adults who were willing and able to save them—and their victims—from tragedy.

What should be done with cold-blooded killers of whatever race? Like most other Americans, the majority of black Americans favor the death penalty. Yet around that punishment swirls the most acrimonious of all racial disparity controversies. Here too, though, the data disclose no trace of racism.

Reviewing the evidence in 1994, Professors Stanley Rothman and Stephen Powers concluded that after controlling for all relevant variables, one finds simply no evidence of racial disparities in post-1972 capital sentencing. The crucial variable is the severity of the crime. Though the vast majority of murders are committed by someone of the same race as the victim, black-on-white murders are more likely than black-on-black murders to be cases of strangers killing strangers and to "involve kidnapping and rape, mutilations, execution-style murders, tortures, and beatings," according to Rothman and Powers. "These are all aggravating circumstances that increase the likelihood of a death sentence."

Even the raw statistics don't show much sign of racism. From the day the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976 through the end of 1993, more than 400,000 Americans were murdered. Over the same period, only 226 killers were executed, 38 percent of them black. In 1993, blacks were 40 percent of the 2,716 prisoners on death row and 36 percent of the 38 convicted murderers executed. The scandalous truth is, most of the thousands of murderers behind bars don't face too harsh but too lenient a punishment. Most get out of prison. Murderers released from state prisons in 1992 served an average of only 5.9 years. There is no evidence that black murderers get out any less quickly than comparable white ones.

Yet, as with juvenile justice, anti–death penalty partisans, including congressmen, promote racially charged falsehoods like those that flew during the 1994 debate in Congress over the so-called Racial Justice Act (RJA). Though this disgraceful bill, which would have established a de facto racial quota system in murder cases, was defeated, it got very serious consideration. It was based on the shoddiest possible research, purporting to show that because of racism, more blacks than whites are executed for similar crimes, and that the law values white victims' lives more than black victims' lives. But in fact, contrary to the fevered fantasies of the RJA's supporters that we have hardly progressed beyond the days of racist lynchings, we actually have arrived at a day when in murder cases generally, and in black-on-white murder cases in particular, "going for the death penalty" has become such a political, judicial, and media nightmare for big-city prosecutors that many urban DAs do not even try. Many, like L.A. District Attorney Gil Garcetti—the man who



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

spared O. J. a death sentence even faster than the jury spared him any sentence at all—not only avoid the death penalty but seem more concerned with preempting any possibility of false but damaging accusations of racism than in following the rule of law, protecting the public, doing the work, and taking the heat.

Recently a page-one story in the *Wall Street Journal* tackled the question of "jury nullification" in cases involving black defendants. It is increasingly common for black jurors to "side with African-American defendants against a mostly white-dominated justice system," even to the point of acquitting black defendants whom the jurors know to be guilty on the legal merits—and even when the victims are black. More black jurors "are choosing to disregard the evidence, however powerful, because they seek to protest racial injustice and to refrain from adding to the already large number of blacks behind bars." The story noted that in the Bronx, where juries are more than 80 percent black and Hispanic, black defendants are acquitted in felony cases 47.6 percent of the time—three times the national acquittal rate of 17 percent for all races. In Washington, D.C., where virtually all defendants and 70 percent of jurors are black, 28.7 percent of all felony trials end in acquittals. Similar patterns hold in Detroit and several other cities where black jurors predominate. Paul Butler, a black criminal-law professor at George Washington University, was quoted as arguing that in cases involving black defendants charged with nonviolent crimes, black jurors should "presume in favor of nullification."

Are racist drug laws responsible for the fact that *weapons arrest rates* during 1993 were five times greater for blacks than for whites?

A response to racism? Something more is at issue, for this isn't happening just in cases where black jurors are hearing white cops testify against black criminals. Black jurors' resistance to police witnesses has grown even as virtually every big city has increased the percentage of blacks on its police force, moved the force ever nearer to mirroring the racial composition of its citizenry, and seen blacks become precinct captains, deputy chiefs, commissioners, and mayors. Between 1983 and 1992, the percentage of blacks on big-city police forces increased in each and every one of the nation's ten biggest police departments—rising 50 percent to 67.8 percent in Washington, D.C., to take one example, where blacks were 65.8 percent of the local population.

Most whites and blacks now accept living, working, shopping, playing, side by side—every interracial interaction save marriage. And yet on crime, America seems closer than ever to becoming two nations separated by race rather than one nation under God. Why? At least part of the reason is that we are inundated with statistics about race, crime, and punishment that needlessly fan black concerns about white racism.

In 1993 the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives (NCIA), an advocacy group that opposes mandatory sentencing and favors making a greater use of probation, parole, and rehabilitation programs, publicized its finding that "43 percent of all young black men in Washington, D.C.—and 56 percent in Baltimore—are firmly in the grip of the justice system." The press broadcast the numbers far and wide. As was later revealed in an analysis by the American Alliance for Rights and Responsibilities, the statistics were a bit inflated, but even after appropriate correction, the NCIA study would still have found about 35 percent of Washington's young black men in prison, in jail, on probation, or on parole. Indeed, in a highly publicized 1995 report, the Sentencing Project, a Washington-based counterpart of NCIA, found that nationwide about one in three black males age 20 to 29 was under some form of correctional supervision. As the Sentencing Project reported, in 1989 about 610,000 black males in their twenties—23 percent of the cohort—were in custody. But by 1995 that number had risen to over 827,000—32.2 percent of the nation's twenty-something black males. One could quibble with the estimates, but the finding is valid; in fact, my own estimates would indicate that the number is already closer to 50 percent in some places, and that nationally it will be nearer to a half than a third by the year 2000.

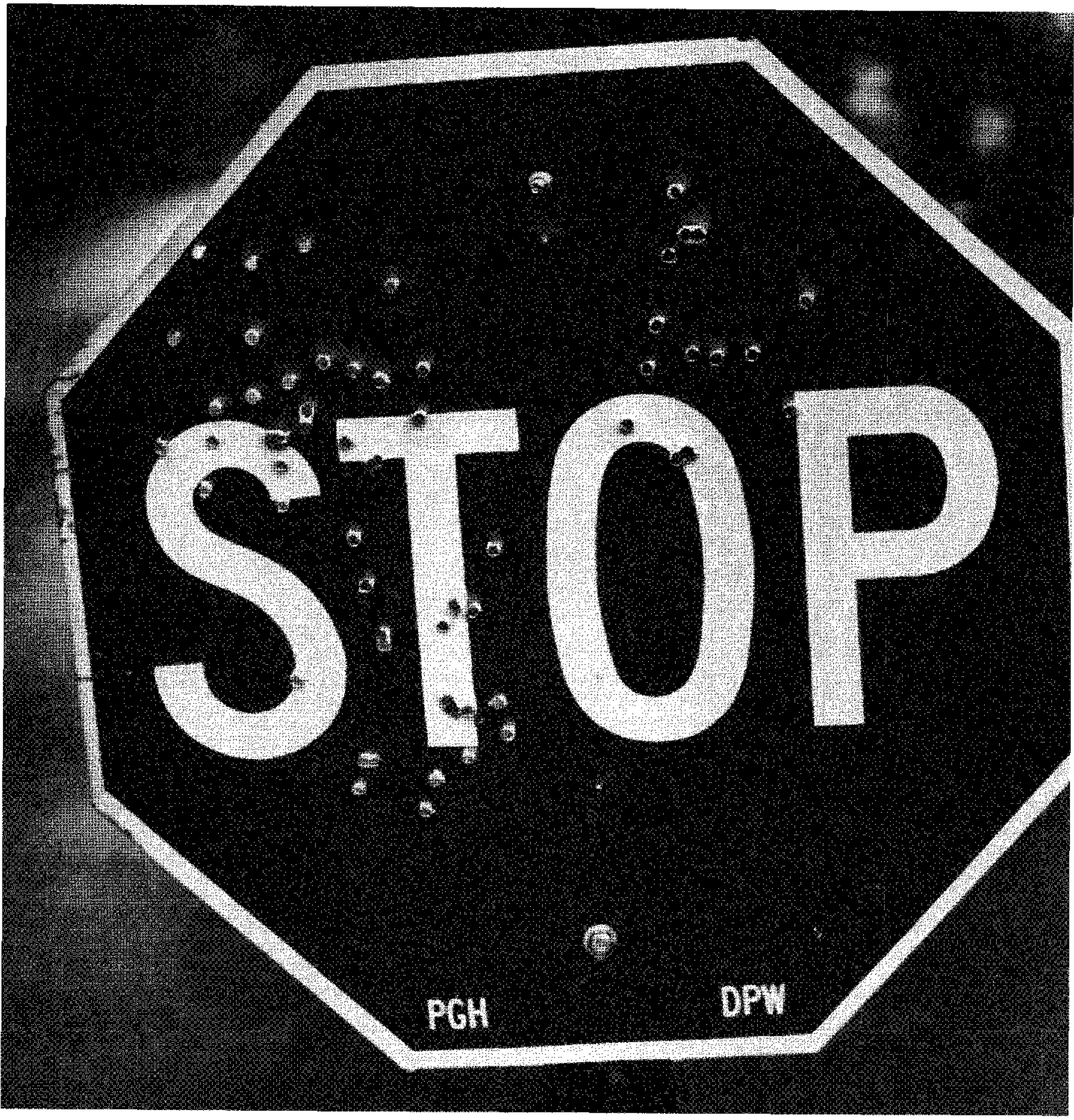
As the Sentencing Project boasts, "the report has had a major impact in the media and among policymakers." Oddly, however, its "major impact" has been to divert attention from the big truth that one in three young black males is under correctional supervision because young black male rates of serious crime are so high. Instead it has focused attention on the half-truths and outright distortions long purveyed by the Sentencing Project, other anti-incarceration advocacy groups, and their funders and allies in the drug legalization movement, the liberal foundations, the politically correct universities, and the elite media. The mantra goes like this: how shameful to America that one in three young black males is in custody . . . most of those in custody are in for petty drug crimes . . . revolving-door justice is a right-wing myth . . . the justice system is racist . . . America has been on an imprisonment binge . . . prisons don't cut crime in the least . . . imprisonment is not only an ineffective response to crime but a racist one.

Predictably, the Sentencing Project and its turn-'em-loose comrades-in-arms have now begun to dig for more such racially polarizing pay dirt. For example, the Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice in San Francisco recently "found" that 40 percent of black men in their twenties in California were under some form of correctional supervision. Representative Maxine Waters held a news conference in which she declared the study proof that in California "the color of your skin dictates whether you will be arrested or not, prosecuted harshly or less harshly, or receive a stiff sentence or gain probation or entry into treatment." The report itself called for a moratorium on prison construction in California until the state's penal code is "overhauled." It also called for mandating "racial impact statements" in all new crime legislation, and for a state commission to study black "overrepresentation." Except for a very few dissenting voices, including the nation's leading crime-policy scholar, UCLA's James Q. Wilson, virtually all the published and broadcast "expert" commentary on this report followed the radical-liberal party line.

The Sentencing Project and its supporters can pretend all they want that racism and the "war on drugs" have put too many harmless young black males in prison. But are racist drug laws responsible for the fact that *weapons arrest rates* during 1993 were five times greater for blacks than for whites? Do they explain the fact that 47 percent of all black men in prison in 1995 were in for a *violent crime*, and that most black state prisoners, like most state prisoners, have committed one or more violent crimes in the past? Do they explain the fact that the black men in prison for a drug crime were, like virtually all prisoners, *repeat offenders* with non-drug crimes on their rap sheets?

There are Washington monument–sized fallacies and contradictions in what the Sentencing Project and its allied spin doctors have argued about "1 in 3." For example, the system is supposedly "racist" because it hammers black drug dealers. But who wants them hammered? Look at the survey data on decriminalizing or legalizing drugs. Without fail, blacks are every bit as opposed to weakening anti-drug enforcement efforts as whites. Only 30 percent of blacks would even consider legalizing marijuana; virtually none will even debate legalizing harder drugs. My dear friend and former colleague Ethan Nadelmann is director of the Lindesmith Center and the country's leading proponent of turning down the volume on the drug war. His most vehement, unyielding critics are not middle-class whites led by right-wing Republicans. Rather, they are poor and working-class blacks led by folks like New York's black Democratic Representative Charles Rangel.

What if, for argument's sake, one swallows the notion that the system now "over-punishes" black drug dealers, and that most of these "drug dealers" are not, in fact, plea bargain–gorged persons with long adult and juvenile records of criminal mischief against persons and property? What then? Which drug-crime 911 calls from black neighborhoods are the police to ignore? Which black drug dealers should be released back to their communities tomorrow morning?


STOP
PGH
DPW

STEVE MELLON/IMPACT VISUALS

You can't have it both ways—protesting that police are less responsive to black crime victims than to white ones in one breath, charging that "too many" black victimizers get caught, convicted, and sentenced, in the next; spinning out conspiratorial theories of white acquiescence in letting drugs flow into black communities in the morning, complaining that efforts to crack down on the drug trade are motivated by racism in the afternoon.

Take a look at the chart on page 27. Based on its latest crime victimization surveys, the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that in 1993 alone blacks committed 1.29 million violent crimes against other blacks—80 percent of all violent crimes against blacks. Blacks also committed 1.54 million violent crimes against whites—18 percent of all violent crimes against whites.

As a number of analysts have begun to notice, blacks are about 50 times more likely to commit violent crimes against whites than whites are to commit violent crimes against blacks. Like the Sentencing Project's "1 in 3" number, this "50 to 1" statistic is technically correct. If you divide the total number of black-on-white violent crimes in 1993 (1.29 million) by the number of black males age 20 to 29 in the population in 1993 (3.94 million), you get a ratio equal to 1,013 violent crimes against whites per 10,000 young black males. If you do the same calculation for the total number of white-on-black crimes (186,000) divided by the total number of twenty-something white males (22.9 million), you get a ratio of 17.6 violent crimes committed by whites against blacks for every 10,000 young white males. Thus, the incidence of interracial black-on-white violent crime by young black males (1,013) is 57.5 times the incidence of interracial white-on-black crime by young white males (17.6). Using different denominators (for example, white versus black males age 15 to 29) moves the statistic down a bit (in the example given, to 48 to 1). But it clusters around "50 to 1."

In his recent essay in *The New Republic*, Glenn Loury explains that "there are roughly eight times as many whites as blacks; and there are about six times as many violent criminals per capita among blacks as among whites. So, if criminals chose their victims at random, without regard to race, one would expect the black-on-white victimization rate per black person to be 48 times as large as the white-on-black rate per white person. Thus, it does not appear that black criminals take affirmative action to find white victims."

Loury is absolutely right, and he or I or any other competent analyst could fashion a half-dozen fancier ways of minimizing the "50 to 1" statistic. In the end, however, nothing we could produce would be other than cold comfort to white victims of black criminals. For every such "explanation" merely underlines the reality behind *both* "1 in 3" and "50 to 1": namely, that young black males *do* commit serious crimes at a much higher rate than whites. Worse, where the growing problems of black juvenile and "wolf pack" crimes are concerned, it may well be that young black criminals really are targeting white victims. For example, as even OJJDP has noted, while about 95 percent of all violent crimes committed by white juveniles in 1991 were against whites, 57 percent of all violent crimes committed by black juveniles also were against whites.

The simple if unpalatable truth, therefore, is that even if we decriminalized black drug-dealing, there would still be racial "disproportionalities" in the justice system. Even if we also decriminalized all black crime save black-on-black violent crime, racial "disproportionalities" would persist.

Here's a suggestive calculation. In 1991, 372,200 black men were in prison, along with 363,600 white men. About 60 percent of all prisoners in 1991 had committed one or more violent crimes in the past. Suppose that we released 40 percent of the black prisoners—the 40 percent, say, with either no official history of violence or the least severe records of it. That would leave 223,320 black men behind bars. Then, because slightly more than half of the violent crimes committed by blacks are committed against whites, let's release, say, 55 percent of the remaining black violent male offenders. That would leave 100,494 black males in prison, 27 percent of 1991's actual total. They would be doing time with 3.6 times as many white males. But since whites in the general population still would outnumber blacks by roughly 8 to 1, the racial "disproportionality" would persist. To make it disappear completely—to get an 8-to-1 white-black ratio in prison—we would have to release all but 45,450 of the 372,200 black men in prison in 1991.

Similarly, 605,062 black adults were on probation in 1993, compared with 1,132,092 white adults, and 240,767 black adults were on parole, compared with 236,083 white adults. Thus, the total black adult community-based corrections population (probation plus parole) numbered 845,829, compared with 1.36 million whites. Let's say we believed that fully 70 percent of all black probationers and parolees, but none of the white ones, were innocent victims of a racist "war on drugs" and should never have been arrested. That would leave 253,749 black adults on probation and parole. We would still have only 5.3, not eight, times as many white adults as blacks "in custody" in the community. To eliminate entirely the racial "disproportionalities" in probation and parole, all but about 170,000 of the more than 800,000 black adults under community-based supervision in 1993 would have to be expunged from the rolls.

Even if, therefore, the justice system punished only those blacks who commit violent crimes—indeed, even if it punished only black violent criminals whose victims were themselves black—blacks would still be "overrepresented" in prison, in jail, on probation, and on parole. Thus, instead of all the ideological nonsense about "1 in 3" and the like, we should begin to focus in common on how revolving-door justice harms all Americans, most especially blacks. As the bipartisan Council on Crime in America has reported: "America's violent crime problem, especially the rage of homicidal and near-homicidal violence, is extremely concentrated among young urban minority males. . . . A study of murders committed in the nation's 75 most populous counties found that blacks were 52 percent of all murder victims and 62 percent of all murder defendants," but "they were only 20 percent of the general population in these metropolitan jurisdictions. . . . Between 1985 and 1992 the rate at which males ages 14 through 17 committed murder increased by about 50 percent for whites and over 300 percent for blacks. Between 1973 and 1992 the rate of violent victimizations of black males ages 12 to 24 increased about 25 percent; for example, black males ages 16 to 19 sustained one violent crime for 11 persons in 1973 versus one for every six in 1992."

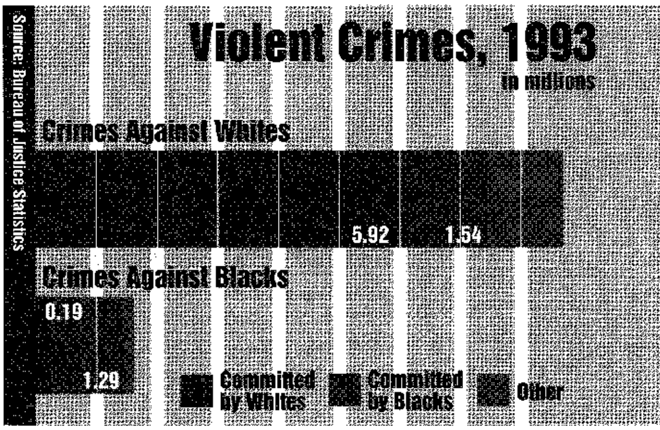
For God's sake, let's be truthful. Especially in urban America, white fears of black crime—like black fears of black crime—are rational far more than reactionary or racist. If Americans are to learn how to deal in common with black crime as a problem of "sin, not skin," as Glenn Loury puts it—as a correctable moral defect of individuals, not some ineradicable racial fate—then we must hear and heed those leaders, black and white, liberal and conservative, who are speaking and doing something about it.

Hear Robert L. Woodson Sr., leader of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise. A veteran of the civil rights movement and an organizer of community- and faith-based groups that reach poor blacks and their children, Woodson speaks not of white racism but of "moral vagrants" in the black community who prey upon their disadvantaged neighbors.

Hear John W. Gillis, another prominent black, who heads California's parole board and is a member of the Council on Crime in America. On the day the council's first report was released to the press, Gillis stared into the cameras and implored responsible journalists to remember who normally puts black convicted criminals where they are, and why: black victims, black witnesses, and black communities—in order to do justice and to protect themselves from murder, mayhem, and deadly drug dealing.

Hear the grief-stricken family of Philadelphia police officer Lauretha Vaird, the city's first female cop—and first black woman—to be killed in the line of duty. Officer Vaird was murdered in cold blood, execution-style. Two of her three alleged killers are 26-year-old local black "gangsta" rappers who apparently practice the hate they sing. Vaird's family members are calling for justice—life in prison or the electric chair for the killers.

Hear Debra Dickerson, the self-described liberal black sister of a young black man paralyzed from the waist down in a drive-by shooting. Read her intensely gripping, highly personal essay published in *The New Republic*, "Who Shot Johnny?" Therein she rages at the black assailant who shot her brother and left him for dead. His "crime"? Waving hello at a car full of boys whom he mistakenly thought he knew. The assailant stood over his bleeding, barely conscious body and said, "Betch'ou won't be doin' nomo' wavin', motha'-fucker." The vicious attacker was never caught.



Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics

Hear Harvard law professor Randall Kennedy, who in a 1994 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed described as "dangerous" the response "that cries 'racism' as part of an all-out defense of any black accused of wrongdoing by 'white' authorities, regardless of the facts of the case," and as "troubling" the "position of some blacks that they will refuse to help send any black person to prison."

Hear the Reverend Jesse Jackson. For over a decade, no national black leader has argued more eloquently against policies that offer blacks jails instead of jobs—and none was quicker to make hay of the Sentencing Project's "1 in 3" finding. But recall Jackson's own tortured words on November

27, 1993: "There is nothing more painful for me at this stage of my life than to walk down the street and hear footsteps and start to think about robbery and then look around and see it's somebody white and feel relieved. How humiliating."

Above all, hear the Reverend Eugene Rivers of Boston. In the 1960s, Rivers was a member of one of Philadelphia's most violent black street gangs. Then the Reverend Ben Smith, a legend in the City of Brotherly Love, set him on the right path. As the Harvard-educated Rivers preaches: "For the people of God, every crisis, no matter how grim, presents a unique opportunity that can only be seen with the eyes of faith. For example, in racially war-torn Boston, black, Roman Catholic, and Jewish clergy have come together by faith to develop concrete strategies" for reducing crime and violence among black youth. In particular, under Rivers's leadership, dozens of black churches have begun moving together to look after abused or neglected inner-city black children, to stand up to drug dealers and gangsters, to spark local business development, and to reclaim the streets and end the terrors.

Rivers, his wife, and his two young children live in the Four Corners section of Dorchester, one of Boston's most violent black neighborhoods, where in 1991 three bullets from a gang shoot-out flew into Rivers's three-year-old son's bedroom. In 1993, Rivers grabbed a local crack merchant by the collar and told him not to deal at the local playground. "I told him, brother, I'll get you a job, I'll get you up for college—the whole nine yards," he says. "He told me to kiss his ass. So I did like I promised: I busted him—called the cops and probation and said, come get him now. They did." A week later, back on the streets and out for revenge, the kid drove by Rivers's house at 2 AM and pumped it with gunfire. No one was hurt.

As Rivers recalled: "The question from all the hoodlums in the neighborhood after that was, 'Is the minister going to cut and run?'" He stayed. He reformed the kid who shot up his home. He branched out, developing alliances with other churches, setting up neighborhood crime-watch programs, and developing a host of practical, tough-love programs, including "adopting a gang" for evangelistic outreach, and commissioning "missionaries" to go to court with juveniles, to make sure both that they get a fair shake and that they comply with the court's requirements. Rivers and his small group of talented volunteers work closely with city officials, the local police, the Catholic Church and schools, and just about everyone else who might make a positive difference in the lives of the kids he's trying to save.

Rivers styles himself a "Christian black nationalist." No one in America is less romantic about the record of inner-city black churches; no one is more realistic about their dwindling congregations, often near-empty coffers, and negative attraction to today's angry young black males. At the same time, no one understands better that when you get right down to it, a resurrection of the inner-city black churches is the one and only key to the resurrection of civil society in crime-and-drugs-ravaged black inner-city neighborhoods. A moral problem—a deficit of conscience, of values, of connectedness—requires a moral solution, and only a moral institution that comes out of the black community, such as the black church, can bring to bear the moral authority to solve it. "It's barbed wire and more black juvenile super-predators," observes Rivers, "or civil society and stronger black churches. It's that simple."

Since November 1994, conservatives have been talking lots about civil society. Now, however, comes the test. Rivers, Smith, and others aren't out there talking; they're out there doing. In Smith's case, he's been doing it for 50 years, a textbook example of the self-reliant, family-centered, church-based, community-strengthening, not-a-penny-from-government approach today's conservative theorists applaud. Conservative elites who are pushing welfare cuts should be putting their own money and influence into supporting the Riverses and the Smiths of inner-city America.

As Rivers exhorts, we must "together embrace the youth, disciplining our young people." In particular, he implores Christians to remember that "whatever you do for the least of these brothers and sisters, you do for Jesus." Amen. ●

BIDs Really Work

Heather Mac Donald

In 1983, the management of Mobil Oil Corporation produced a videotape that would change the face of midtown Manhattan. Mobil's leaders, having resolved to abandon the company's headquarters on East 42nd Street in favor of an office park in Fairfax, Virginia, decided to show the city why the company was leaving. Exhibit A: the videotape.

Business improvement districts have used private-sector initiative to restore cleanliness and order to public spaces in cities across the nation. Success has won them bitter enemies—especially in New York.

Filmed in and around Grand Central Terminal, directly across from Mobil's headquarters, the short, un-narrated tape reveals a city that has lost control of its public spaces. Cigarette butts decompose in pools of urine outside the terminal; newspaper cyclones swirl wildly down the street; illegal vendors hawk cheap toys from overturned cardboard boxes; crumpled men lie hopelessly on the sidewalk; legions of commuters try unsuccessfully to open terminal doors mysteriously tied shut with twine. The tape then flashes to the pastoral suburban headquarters of Exxon and Bell Labs. Finally, a question appears: "What do we tell our employees?"

The tape got the city's attention. In response, aides to Mayor Koch convened a meeting of midtown business leaders in 1984 to discuss how to clean up the Grand Central area. Improvement was imperative. The terminal and its surroundings provided the first glimpse of New York to thousands of visitors and commuters daily—and what they saw was the largest homeless encampment in the city, hustlers flocking upon tourists and demanding payment for flagging down a taxi, graffiti splattered across stores, filthy sidewalks, and broken streetlights.

In an implicit admission of governmental defeat, the city implored midtown business leaders to craft a remedy. They responded by organizing a business improvement district, or BID—a special taxing district that would raise additional revenue for cleaning, patrolling, and improving the district's streets and providing services to the homeless. Today the squalor around Grand Central is just a bad memory. The BID—officially called the Grand Central Partnership—put an army of cleaners to work scouring the sidewalks and removing graffiti within 24 hours of its appearance. The BID's security patrol has produced a 60 percent drop in crime. Taxi dispatchers today operate orderly queues outside the station; and new lampposts, planters, and trash receptacles, paid for by the BID, are sprouting up across the district.

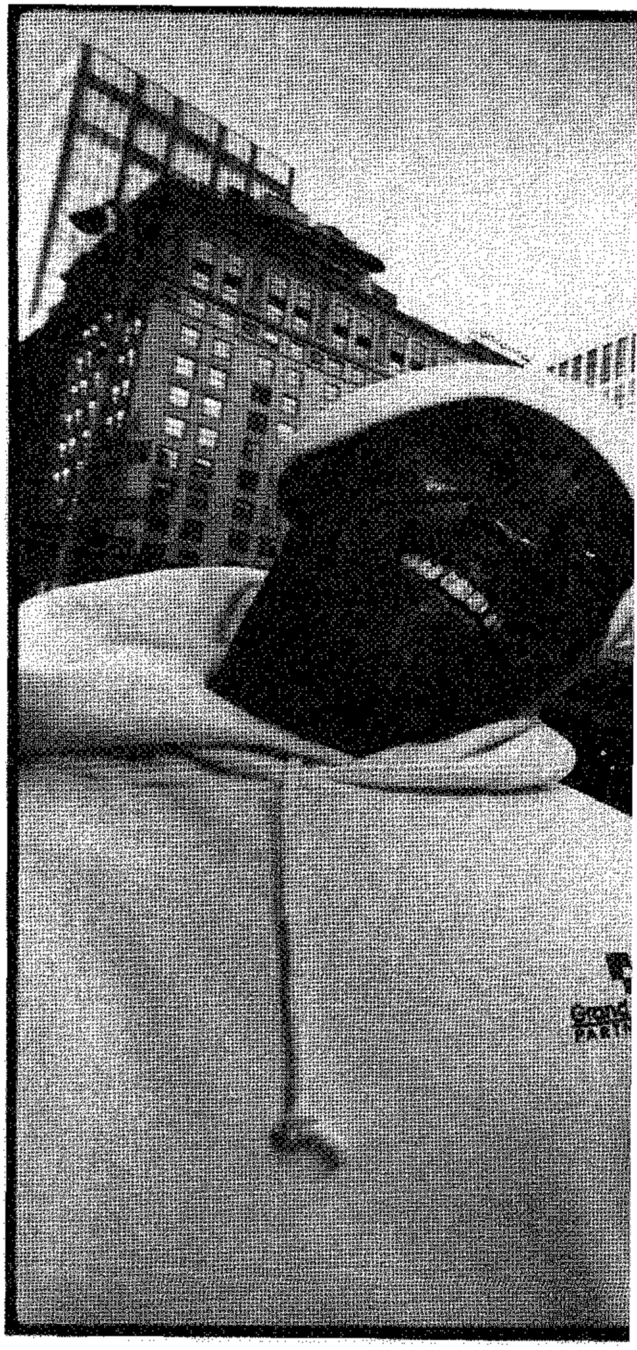
BIDs have emerged as one of the most important developments in urban governance over the past two decades. They have created a mechanism for harnessing private-sector creativity to solve public problems, and their success has sharply highlighted the failures of city government. Today some 1,000 BIDs operate in the U.S.—in big cities like Houston and Philadelphia as well as in small ones, in rich neighborhoods as well as in poor. Increasing in number monthly, BIDs are trailblazers in solving such urban quality-of-life problems as aggressive panhandling, graffiti, and vandalism.

Little wonder that they've also generated controversy. Critics charge that the additional tax burden they impose on business will prove fatal to business's long-term viability; that BIDs represent a dangerous concentration of private power in public spaces; and that they will further balkanize cities into wealthy and poor districts.

Yet the great advantage of BIDs lies in their private characteristics. Unlike government, BIDs possess finite goals, which they can accomplish free of civil service rules and bureaucratic procedures. More important, they negotiate labor contracts from a clean slate: unbound by decades-old municipal labor deals, they can reward—and fire—employees according to their productivity, not their civil service status.

Nowhere are these questions debated more violently than in New York City, which boasts the continent's largest concentration of BIDs—34 in operation, with up to 39 more in the wings. Their success and power have threatened a host of existing interests, from community boards and the City Council to the social service industry. The ongoing fight over BIDs, centered on the Grand Central Partnership—the city's most ambitious BID—has brought out every atavistic anti-business instinct in the city and thrown an X ray on those forces that impede an improved quality of life.

New York's BID movement was a response to deteriorating municipal services. In the 1960s and 1970s, the city started devoting an increasing share of its budget to employee salaries and pensions and to social services. The growth of municipal



Photographs by Bruce Davidson/Magnum

The Grand Central Partnership, led by Dan Biederman (center), has transformed midtown Manhattan.

unions meant that it cost more and more to provide less and less service. At the same time, court rulings regarding loitering and police procedure seriously damaged the city's ability to keep order.

New York's first BID grew out of Con Edison's efforts to clean up the then-troubled 14th Street area in Manhattan in the late 1970s. In a valiant effort to beat back the grime and crime engulfing the area, Con Edison and other major property owners around Union Square started sweeping the streets and sidewalks. The local merchants' association tried to persuade neighboring businesses to contribute to the initiative, costing $10,000 a month, but donations were sporadic and paltry. Finally, a dispirited Con Edison gave up the effort—provoking an uproar from the same merchants who originally wouldn't pitch in.

Con Edison and other property owners then decided to take advantage of laws that the state and city had passed in 1980 and 1982, authorizing merchants to form self-taxing districts for the provision of services. Under the new laws, local merchants would have to agree to form the BID, but once it was formed, their contributions would be mandatory, collected by the city under its normal taxing powers, like any other levy. Bringing to public spaces the techniques of "common space management" that made malls and office parks so successful, BIDs would maintain security and cleanliness in the area and oversee group marketing and facade improvements. Today, thanks to the 14th Street BID, the area around Union Square is cleaner and safer than it has been in decades.

After the 14th Street BID, the next few BIDs were in even less affluent areas of the city—Washington Heights in Manhattan; North Flatbush Avenue and Grand Street in Brooklyn. All were facing similar problems—government money for business improvement was scarce, city services were declining, and voluntary merchants' associations were strapped for cash. Then, as now, many BIDs began with the homely goal of raising enough money for Christmas lights.

The small BIDs, such as White Plains Road in the Bronx and Grand Street in East Williamsburg, perform an essential, if modest, role in keeping neighborhoods together. The North Flatbush BID, for example, with the second-smallest budget in the city, stretches its $83,700 over a variety of services. Director Richard Russo has organized local teens to paint stores' graffiti-covered roll-down security gates in decorative designs. He has printed up attractive shopping guides and shopping bags for the district. And the North Flatbush BID's solitary sanitation worker is having a real effect: traffic and light poles on the avenue are free of the illegal fliers that one block away, on Seventh Avenue, flap from the poles like papier-mâché.

Had BIDs remained only small-scale enterprises, they might never have become a flashpoint of controversy. But at the same time that property owners in North Flatbush and Grand Street were organizing BIDs, a far larger BID was taking shape in midtown Manhattan with the explicit aim of restoring social order in a public space. Bryant Park, a large Beaux Arts greensward behind the New York Public Library on 42nd Street, had become a glaring symbol of the city's inability to control its public spaces. The park was a haven for drug dealers and petty criminals; shoot-outs and assaults were common. Law-abiding workers in the area feared and shunned the park, and surrounding property values had taken a nosedive.

In 1980, Andrew Heiskell, vice chairman of the New York Public Library and chairman of Time, Inc., proposed, as part of the library's own renovation program, that a nonprofit corporation of adjacent property owners should restore and manage the park—an idea that eventually evolved into a BID. L. Robert Lieb, co-owner of 81 West 40th Street and one of Heiskell's original backers, explains the difficulties the plan faced: "To go into a down area and put additional taxes in was a gamble. Even some of the smartest developers were hesitant to sign on; we had to sell them on the idea that to make money, you have to spend money." The hard reality, however, says Lieb, was that "if we didn't clean up the park ourselves, it wasn't going to happen."

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City hall welcomed Heiskell's idea, but elsewhere it brought out the city's most virulent antigentrification sentiment. Though the park would remain city property, open to all, civic groups such as the Parks Council, as well as academics and the press, accused the project's sponsors of seeking a private enclave for the rich. A proposal to build a restaurant in the park, whose revenues would contribute some $2 million toward park renovation, drew dire warnings of the imminent privatization of all public spaces. Critics conjured up Dickensian scenes of the ragged masses pressing their noses up against the restaurant's large windows, while fat bankers consumed huge quantities of goose liver and Bordeaux inside. Why this scenario should represent more of a taking of the public domain than leaving the park the exclusive province of criminals was never explained.

Nevertheless, the Bryant Park BID won approval, and it finished the restoration in 1995. Overnight, the park became the most successful public square in the city, showered with awards. Round-the-clock security and an exacting standard of maintenance keep the space safe and immaculate—even down to its public toilets. The crowds thronging the park throughout the day and evening have belied the charge that it would become the exclusive province of the rich. "I have yet to see turnstiles," muses Lieb. "No one has ever said: 'You can't go into the park.' They *have* said: 'You can't urinate on the bushes and attack people.'" Property values around the park have risen; many buildings have waiting lists for tenants. Former critics of the Bryant Park BID are now unabashed supporters.

"No one has ever said: 'You can't go into the park.' They *have* said: 'You can't urinate on the bushes and attack people.'"

This fight was a dress rehearsal for a larger, more bitter battle. As the Bryant Park BID got under way, city and business leaders were discussing the Grand Central problem, whose solution would pit the eventual Grand Central BID against one of the most powerful, and retrograde, forces in the city—the social service industry.

At the urging of the Koch administration, Peter Malkin, a lawyer and eventual chairman of the Grand Central BID, began organizing local property owners in 1985. Malkin hired Dan Biederman, the Bryant Park BID's young director and president, to serve the same roles in the Grand Central BID. The plan Malkin and Biederman devised was the most ambitious yet: a sweeping renovation of the streetscape, including specially designed streetlights and signage throughout the district, new trees in pits that allow deep watering during droughts, ornamental planters, trash receptacles, redesigned food carts and newspaper kiosks, restoration of the Pershing Square Viaduct that leads traffic from the elevated roadway around Grand Central Terminal back to Park Avenue, floodlighting the terminal, and replacement of all sidewalk wheelchair ramps.

In late 1988 the Grand Central Partnership—a 50-block district extending roughly from 39th Street to 48th Street and from Second Avenue to Fifth Avenue—began operations. Only one of the 181 property owners had filed an objection in accordance with the law. With some 51 million square feet of commercial real estate, the district comprised 14 percent of Manhattan's total office space, valued at approximately $7.8 billion in 1994.

The partnership, today with a $10 million annual budget, has transformed the district with a fanatical sense of mission. Biederman is a perfectionist and has assumed an unmistakably proprietary attitude toward the district. Pointing to an elegant new lamp pole crowned by a clutter of parking signs, he sighs: "The city has been putting things on our poles that we don't like." Characteristically, the partnership has offered to provide alternative poles.

In a city where official indifference to the broadest assaults on human dignity had until recently been the norm, such devotion to detail should be welcome. But for many New Yorkers, such an attitude signals a sinister intention to usurp the public domain. The partnership's imperialistic designs on midtown Manhattan seemed confirmed when Malkin and Biederman announced plans in 1990 to establish another BID on 34th Street. No matter that city hall backed the plan, recognizing that it was incapable of cleaning up the area around Madison Square Garden in time for the Democratic National Convention in 1992.

Then the Grand Central Partnership and the 34th Street BID announced their intention to issue some $55 million in bonds to finance their capital improvements program, with interest and principal to be paid with the BID assessments. Since the bonds are not backed by the full faith and credit of the city, the city would not be liable in the case of a default. Yet all resulting capital improvements would become city property—a gift to the city. Even so, State Senator Manfred Ohrenstein introduced anti-BID legislation, with a specific anti-Biederman clause. "You've got one man running a private government for public purposes in the center of Manhattan," Ohrenstein told *Crain's New York Business* in 1992. "It's just too much power with no control, no accountability, no review." The legislation ultimately went nowhere, for even the Democratic Assembly realized the value of BIDs to the city. In 1992 and 1993 the partnership and the 34th Street BID issued $32 million and $24 million in bonds, respectively, receiving a credit rating of A1—far higher than the city's.

The partnership, Kempton said, ran a human "waste disposal program" whose main goal was "to find a place to hide" the homeless.

The Grand Central Partnership's greatest infraction lay in its attempt to offer an alternative to existing services for the homeless. From its inception, the partnership had acknowledged a duty to help the homeless who congregated in and around Grand Central. Then–Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins had made his support for the BID conditional on its involvement in homeless services. Robert Hayes, founder of the Coalition for the Homeless, the city's most powerful homeless advocacy and litigation machine, had urged the partnership's involvement in social services.

In 1985—the same year that the partnership was starting to organize—the Coalition for the Homeless had begun a feeding line outside Grand Central on Vanderbilt Avenue. Unruly and dangerous, the line brought hundreds of men each night to the area; fights—one of them fatal—often broke out. Businesses and restaurants complained that the men were defecating in their doorways. Several other charitable organizations in the neighborhood also offered food, with the result that men were racing around the district to collect three dinners in one evening. The food line invited the public to dislike the homeless; advocates predictably complained of "backlash."

To improve the district, the partnership needed to get the food line off the streets. "I realized that if you attack Robert Hayes, he only grows bigger," explains Jeff Grunberg, director of the partnership's social service programs. "Instead, we decided to compete by providing the homeless what they want indoors." In 1989 the partnership opened a 24-hour, multi-service drop-in center on East 44th Street. It is the only drop-in center in the city that turns no one away except those who show up drunk or threaten violence, and one of the few programs willing to cater predominantly to young black men, many of whom have psychiatric disorders, criminal records, and addictions. Yet it is also among the city's safest.

Three months after the partnership opened its Social Service Center, Hayes, to his credit, moved the coalition's feeding line to the center. But the agreement between the coalition and the partnership was extremely fragile. Hayes soon left the directorship, replaced by Mary Brosnahan, a far more confrontational advocate with a deep disdain for "muckety-muck business people," as she calls them. Periodically, the coalition's food line would reappear on Vanderbilt Avenue—in protest over the partnership's policy of metal detection for weapons, or the partnership's allowing the "coalition's homeless" into the building early (the coalition preferred that they wait on the street), or over the air-conditioning, crowding, or alleged lack of safety in the center. When the line returned to Vanderbilt, the partnership would try to lure the "coalition's homeless" back inside by passing out menus for the center's meals on the food line—a bourgeois tactic viewed with Olympian disgust by coalition officials. The partnership had encroached upon the advocates' universe by opening a competing shop: its center offered not only hot meals and a place to stay overnight but also job training and a program to prepare people for, and place them in, housing. The partnership's record in hiring the formerly homeless is unparalleled among service providers. Given these incursions into the advocates' territory, the chances of peaceful coexistence between the coalition and the partnership—in the same building, no less!—were slim.

Writing in *New York Newsday* upon the occasion of the food line's reappearance in 1994, columnist Murray Kempton spoke for the city's entire left wing in his contempt for the partnership's efforts. The partnership, he said, ran a human "waste disposal program" whose main goal was "to find a place to hide" the homeless. The center's purpose, he claimed, was "obscuring [the homeless] with cosmetology"—never mind that its "cosmetology" included giving the homeless drug treatment, mental health counseling, housing, and jobs, as well as food and shelter.

It began to seem that for the advocates and their allies in the press, the only place the homeless belonged was on the streets. Several months before the Democratic National Convention, the partnership had begun an innovative program to persuade people living in homeless encampments to seek help. The partnership's outreach workers would give the encampments' occupants a coupon for $5 and a hot breakfast, redeemable at a social service "network fair," where the homeless would meet an array of service providers and learn about their programs. If a person actually hooked up with a provider, the partnership offered to reimburse the provider at the city rate and pay the homeless person's first month's rent if the organization found him housing. The coalition would have none of it. A "passive sweep!" cried Mary Brosnahan. The advocates charged that the network fair program—like the Social Service Center—was intended simply to get the homeless out of sight for the convention. The Coalition for the Homeless, by contrast, planned to *create* a homeless encampment on the periphery of the convention, a sort of Potemkin Village in reverse.

What was at stake in the battle between the Grand Central Partnership and the city's traditional service providers was not just ideology, but money—lots of it. The partnership supplemented its own assessments with government grants—in 1995 the Social Service Center received $1.7 million from the city's Department of Homeless Services and $300,000 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for nutrition. When Peter Malkin and Dan Biederman announced their intention to form a BID on 34th Street, the advocates and their allies on local community boards decided that this was the moment to get their hands on that money. Peter Smith, then president of the Partnership for the Homeless, began an all-out campaign in the press and the community boards to tar the Grand Central Partnership. Smith warned that if the 34th Street BID was approved, New Yorkers "will lose a huge chunk of Manhattan." The Social Service Center was one of the "worst in the city," he falsely charged. Smith demanded that the 34th Street BID sponsors give *him* the money they had set aside for social services. He found an ally in the local community boards, often populated by representatives of social service agencies. During board meetings about the 34th Street BID, people screamed at Jeff Grunberg, director of social services for the Grand Central Partnership, that he was "causing homelessness."

After the advocates' political attacks came the legal ones. In February 1995 the Urban Justice Center sued the Grand Central Partnership for violating minimum wage laws in its homeless job-training program. "I've never seen exploitation as bad as at the partnership," deadpanned Doug Lasdon, executive director of the Urban Justice Center, to a sympathetic City Council. The advocates

Bryant Park, once a haven for criminals and drug dealers, is now one of the city's best public spaces.

charged that the partnership was trying to get rich off its homeless, paying highly capable workers slave wages to perform needed tasks. A ludicrous charge: the partnership's trainees are initially incapable of holding down a job—no more than a third show up for their kitchen and maintenance jobs on any given day. The program gives the trainees needed discipline and confidence: a tall, thin man working in the center's kitchen drew himself up and told me emphatically, "This is *not* a homeless shelter; this is a self-help center." The partnership has a highly credible record in moving people into full-time jobs: 400 former clients are working to date, 200 of those doing menial or administrative jobs for the partnership itself.

In December 1995 the Urban Justice Center sued again, charging the partnership with violating the Constitution by not giving residents in the district equal representation on the BID's board of directors. BIDs revive America's "tradition of non-democracy," Lasdon told me. "For hundreds of years, we haven't had democracy but landowners voting." Of course, the partnership's bylaws merely follow the state and city BID legislation in requiring that over half the board consist of property owners, and the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld property qualifications for voting in special assessment districts.

But these suits, for all their cost and negative publicity, cannot compare in destructive force with the brilliant public relations coup launched on April 14, 1995—the day the *New York Times* published its by now infamous "goon squad" article on page one. Noting that the partnership trains its own homeless clients to do homeless outreach, in the belief that the formerly homeless can best persuade those still on the street to seek services, the *Times* charged that the partnership encourages these trainees to beat up the homeless and drive them off private and public property. Four former partnership outreach workers—brought to the *Times* by the Coalition for the Homeless and the Urban Justice Center—claimed to have kicked and bludgeoned the homeless who resisted services as part of their expected duties. The partnership vehemently denied the charges, pointing out that two of the self-confessed "goons" had been fired for stealing partnership vans, and all had axes to grind. Three of the accusers are parties to the Urban Justice Center's minimum wage suit.

The *Times*'s article resembles nothing so much as the Salem witch trials, with no charge too fantastical to print. A former secretary of the partnership who had been fired for being in the office after hours says that the director of homeless outreach dispatched his workers in the morning with the cry: "OK, goon squad! Go get 'em!" The partnership, charges the *Times*, referred to its outreach workers not only as "goon squads," but also as "wrecking crews" and "vigilantes."

With the publication of the *Times* article, a glad cry went out across the city. The allegations immediately entered city lore as the gospel truth. The City Council Committee on General Welfare, chaired by Councilman Stephen DiBrienza, the social service industry's mouthpiece, held a circus-like hearing on the partnership's "goon squads," and the Finance Committee declared a moratorium on new BID approvals and ordered a review of BIDs, targeted undisguisedly at the Grand Central Partnership. The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, working closely with the City Council Welfare Committee, yanked a half-million-dollar grant to the partnership. "There's no doubt that these things happened," announced Andrew Cuomo, assistant secretary of HUD and a former New York homeless advocate.

The question is: what "things" happened? In one of the incidents alleged by the Coalition for the Homeless—a fight between an outreach worker and a homeless person in front of the Philip Morris building on 42nd Street and Park Avenue—the partnership outreach worker filed a police report and a criminal complaint for assault. The alleged "victim" filed a cross-complaint; neither party pursued the matter further. The partnership made no effort to cover up the incident. In another—an alleged assault on a man under a box in the snow—although the partnership had no record of the event, it now believes its outreach worker feared the man was dead and sought to rouse him. Out of 70,000 contacts between partnership outreach workers and the homeless, these are the only charges for which *any* evidence has been found. They do not support the fundamental indictment against the partnership: that it sanctioned a policy of aggression toward the homeless. Homeless advocates have been videotaping alleged abuse of the homeless on the streets for years; they recorded none of the beatings allegedly routine among the partnership's outreach workers. Likewise, hundreds of hours of videotape by banks inside their ATM vestibules, the most frequent site of partnership outreach services, yield no record of the goon squad activity. The partnership has asked the Manhattan district attorney to investigate the charges; that report has yet to issue. No one has denied that the partnership encouraged abuse more adamantly than the partnership's own homeless outreach workers.

The episode has further damaged the partnership's reputation and isolated it within the BID community. Some of the big competing BID managers have taken to delivering gratuitous and sanctimonious potshots at the partnership. Ultimately, however, the partnership will ride out the storm—it is too effective to be destroyed.

The greatest damage from the smear campaign is not to the partnership but to the city itself, which will lose a highly promising alternative approach to homeless services. The partnership's outreach effort had succeeded in striking a unique balance between the needs of the homeless and the interests of property owners and public order. But now such balance is forbidden, thanks to a report by Robert Hayes, whom the partnership, in a striking show of good faith, had asked to evaluate its outreach and social service programs in the wake of the goon squad charges. Though Hayes's report unequivocally supports the Social Service Center and dismisses the goon squad allegations as "demagoguery," it reasserts the prevailing, destructive social service orthodoxy that homeless outreach must concern itself solely with the interests of the homeless, without reference to the public interest.

As the Hayes report details, when an outreach worker found a homeless person on private property, such as a bank ATM vestibule, he would try to persuade the homeless person to accompany him to the partnership's Social Service Center. So far, so good. But if the homeless person refused to move, the outreach worker would counter: "You're on private property; I am therefore obligated to notify the bank security officer, who will evict you. So you might as well come with me now where you may get shelter and food."

That argument, said Hayes, violates the most fundamental tenet of homeless outreach: the outreach worker may not "mix outreach and security." Telling the homeless person he is trespassing would jeopardize the precious bond of trust that the outreach worker hopes to establish with him. In fact, states Hayes, quoting several social service "professionals," the fondest wish of the outreach worker is that the homeless person will still be trespassing in the same spot the next day, so that he can re-administer his services (thus, one might note, filling up his quota of requisite homeless "contacts" for the month).

The absurdity of this argument is overwhelming. Nothing could be less conducive to re-integrating the homeless into society than exempting them from the rules that others have to live by. To treat the homeless as sensitive plants that may be damaged by learning that they are breaking the law is profoundly "infantilizing," to borrow a word from Hayes. Equally nonsensical is the implicit assumption that the homeless person is better off either left in a bank vestibule or evicted by a security officer, rather than being persuaded by the invocation of the law into shelter. Before the partnership persuaded bankers to try its more compassionate approach, banks used dogs to evict the homeless.

Hayes's report subtly reaffirms a basic tenet of the left: business will always oppress the powerless, even when it claims to be working for the common good. He cites with concern the statutory purposes of BIDs: to "restore and promote business activity" and to enhance the "enjoyment and protection of the public"—purposes that, he says, may put the BIDs in conflict with the mission of helping the homeless. Thus, he concludes, BIDs should not deliver social services on their own; any such efforts must be directed by "experts" and "professionals." Unsurprisingly, those "experts" acclaimed the report as the definitive statement on homeless outreach.

In response, the partnership meekly capitulated: its outreach workers have stopped telling homeless people that they are on private property. As a consequence, Chase Bank canceled its contract with the partnership for outreach services, now relying solely on its security officers—hardly a victory for the homeless. The partnership has also reconstituted the board of directors of its Social Service Corporation with a large majority of "seasoned social service experts," including a director who once headed the radical Mobilization for Youth—the original failed War on Poverty program—and it is considering Hayes's recommendation to find a "sophisticated outreach agency" to replace its own former homeless clients.

Nothing could be less conducive to re-integrating the homeless into society than exempting them from the rules that others have to live by.

Game, set, and match to the advocates: the Hayes report preserves a huge pot of money for social services and re-establishes the social service industry's hegemony over it, as HUD awarded the grant money it had stripped from the Grand Central Partnership to the Partnership for the Homeless. And a move is afoot in the City Council to prohibit BIDs from direct involvement in social services, thus locking up the advocates' monopoly over government money. This proposal, still in its early stages, would be a heartbreaking loss to the city. The partnership, which started delivering services because it couldn't persuade existing organizations to take on the challenge of its universal drop-in center, has provided some of the most creative solutions to homelessness in recent years. Requiring all BIDs to contract out with existing service providers, as Councilman DiBrienza would like to do, would limit new ideas in a field desperately in need of them.

By now, about the only people willing to support the partnership publicly are BID managers in other cities—many of whom also see dealing with the homeless as central to their mission. Nationally, the reaction to the uproar in New York is one of utter incomprehension. "West of the Mississippi, we think: 'You guys are nuts!'" exclaims Margaret Mullen, executive director of the Phoenix BID and chairman of the International Downtown Association. "Tell them in New York to grow up and call our social service people—and leave Dan Biederman alone!" If such a smear campaign were ever waged against the Phoenix BID, Mullen says, "the business community would be so offended that it would stop giving money to social services."

Indeed, what the Hayes report finds so objectionable in the partnership's operations—allegedly combining "outreach" and "security"—is far more innocuous than what BIDs in other cities do, without protest. The BID in Portland, Oregon, a bastion of liberalism, sends out its security guards to give morning "wake-up calls" to the homeless—in other words, to roust them from the doorways of businesses. Phoenix's downtown guides—like roving ambassadors—evict the homeless from private property and call the police if a homeless person is panhandling or urinating in public. Baltimore's downtown guides ask panhandlers standing in front of businesses to move along. If a panhandler refuses, the guides station themselves on either side of him and discourage pedestrians from giving money. In 1993 the ACLU sued the Baltimore BID over its practice of asking panhandlers to move along; the BID board refused to settle out of court. "Our board felt it was a battle worth fighting—the community had to find out what its rights are," explains Frank Russo, the Baltimore BID's head of security. The BID won.

Says the Phoenix BID director: "Tell them in New York to grow up and call our social service people—and leave Dan Biederman alone!"

All these cities, like New York, have extensive systems of help for the homeless, but they also recognize what many in New York are still oblivious to: "If you emphasize individual rights," Baltimore's Russo argues, "the city goes bankrupt. You have to do what needs to be done to see that the city survives."

While the Grand Central Partnership's social service program should have been a non-issue, BIDs do pose genuinely serious questions for cities. Critics within the business community charge that BIDs impose a second tax on businesses for services they are already paying the city to provide. In the long run, these critics say, the double taxation, rather than the enhancement of services, will determine whether firms stay or leave.

But the BID assessments are tiny compared with the city's own tax burden. Real estate taxes in midtown Manhattan run between $6 to $14 a square foot compared with the Grand Central Partnership's assessment of 14 cents a square foot. BID assessments range from a few hundred dollars a year for small buildings to $500,000 for the Empire State Building. A sensible proposal floated in 1994 by Deputy Mayor John Dyson to allow at least part of BID assessments to be tax deductible would further defang the double-taxation argument.

The evidence at least partly confutes the economic argument against BIDs. Buildings are starting to advertise membership in the most successful BIDs: the law firms of Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett and Davis, Polk & Wardwell say the existence of the Grand Central Partnership figured in their decisions to relocate to midtown. Property owners in some areas, such as the perimeter of Bryant Park, point to the existence of the BID to explain the zero vacancy rates of many buildings. Even small-property owners view the additional expense as a worthwhile investment: "I have no problem paying more if it upgrades the area," says Howard Somers, owner of Grand Book Center, a 40-year-old business in the Grand Street BID. "The more the area is worth, the more my property is worth."

And BID revenues don't only duplicate what city taxes are supposed to provide. Even the best-run city is unlikely to provide, as many of the larger BIDs do, continual sidewalk cleaning and graffiti removal for over 12 hours a day, peripatetic visitor guides, special events, and help with store upgrading. Many BIDs aim at a standard set not by the ideal city but by Disney World or a premier shopping mall. And if midtown merchants want, say, floodlighting at Grand Central Terminal, they'd be politically naive to expect taxpayers in Jamaica, Queens, to pay for it.

It's true that many BID activities are things the city should be doing. But what is the alternative? If all BIDs were to cease operations tomorrow, it is fanciful to think that New York would revamp its work rules, civil service policies, and spending priorities fast or fully enough to prevent further business decline. Forcing businesses to die a slow death in order to highlight the city's failings is unlikely to make the city refocus its priorities.

Yet BIDs make the situation *worse*, respond critics, by taking pressure off New York to reform its ways. By providing basic services themselves, critics argue, BIDs "enable" the city to continue pouring money into salaries, pensions, and a massive welfare apparatus while ignoring the essentials of municipal government. Furthermore, opponents say, BIDs "co-opt" out of the political process the most powerful citizens. The large real estate interests, the argument goes, which otherwise would be screaming at city hall about the filth in the streets, fall suddenly silent once in a BID, because *their* neighborhood is clean. Meanwhile the rest of the city continues its long decline.

The first argument—that BIDs enable dysfunctional spending priorities—has some bite. BIDs conceivably allow the city to shift resources even further from basic services in the knowledge that others will pick up the slack. Some people have argued, analogously, that the Central Park Conservancy, a private philanthropic organization that contributes millions to the maintenance of Central Park, has allowed the city to slash further its entire parks budget, though proving the claim is virtually impossible. But again, the response has to be pragmatic: *not* picking up the slack is unlikely to produce a positive result. And conceivably, BIDs could force reform of city priorities by creating a higher standard for neighborhood cleanliness and safety. New Yorkers have grown accustomed to a barbaric level of litter and filth; the best BIDs show what a city should look like. With any luck, residents will start demanding that the entire city look as clean.

As for the argument that BIDs co-opt people out of the political process, the opposite has proved true. BIDs involve business as never before in the day-to-day operations of cities. The BID becomes a watchdog for service delivery because it is so close to the ground. When New York cut trash pickups in midtown, the Times Square BID fought—with some success—to get them back. Rather than fostering just a parochial commitment to turf, the New York BIDs are working together on citywide solutions to citywide problems, such as illegal street vending.

Another argument against BIDs is that they are elitist, allowing wealthy areas of the city to help themselves *at the expense of* less wealthy areas. BIDs do not simply add to the total pot of city services, charge critics such as Robert Solomon, a law professor at Yale who is bringing the suit against the Grand Central Partnership over its board representation; they are a zero-sum transaction: the BID's gain is someone else's loss. Solomon's reasoning: when a city proposes to raise taxes, members of a BID—who are already paying an additional tax—will fight against the increase all the more strenuously. "If the city currently has a revenue pie of 100 pennies," complains Solomon, "and the BIDs self-tax, raising the pie to 110 pennies, they get to keep all those additional pennies and will pressure the city against the tax increase."

So much the better! one hastens to reply. The more pressure against tax increases, the better for the city. And surely Solomon is naive to think that without BIDs, property owners would be any more amenable to tax increases. More important, Solomon's zero-sum analysis of BIDs is utterly wrong. BIDs are a net gain to urban well-being, because they operate in the public realm, adding benefits available to all city residents, not just BID members. We are all free riders on BID expenditures. Solomon also ignores BIDs' potential effect on a city's tax base. If they increase the value of commercial property, they will contribute additional revenue to city coffers and allow continued funding of those (often counterproductive) welfare programs that Solomon cherishes.

Anti-elitists also argue that BIDs exacerbate existing disparities in the city, because some BIDs have big budgets, others small ones, and some areas can't afford BIDs at all. Accordingly, Doug Lasdon, executive director of the Urban Justice Center and professional scourge of the Grand Central Partnership, recommends raising taxes citywide 1 percent, so that every neighborhood can be given a $10 million budget like the Grand Central Partnership. This proposal illustrates that at bottom, BIDs offend left-wing sensibilities because they violate the redistributionist principle of ordinary taxation. BID taxes are virtually the only taxes in the city that are spent locally: those who pay more, get more. The absence of redistribution is a strong argument in BIDs' favor. Certain areas of the city are economically more important than others, and increased spending on them is in the entire city's self-interest. The big Manhattan BIDs target resources where they can stimulate the most economic activity to the benefit of the whole city.

Leaders of the smaller BIDs are the first to recognize this. Stan Bonilla, manager of the East Brooklyn Industrial Park BID, says he "absolutely does not agree with [Lasdon's] redistribution [argument]. The Grand Central Partnership is at the doorstep of the world. If they can afford to spend $500 million, go ahead—it's not affecting East Brooklyn." Leonard Battle of the Grand Street BID agrees: "It's unfair to redistribute; that's taxation without representation. My needs are different from [those of] the Grand Central Partnership or Metrotech [the largest BID in Brooklyn and sixth largest in the city]."

The City Council's Finance Committee added one last set of criticisms, in a November 1995 report on BID operations. Based on a telephone survey of some 6 percent of property owners and BID managers, the report purported to find widespread ignorance and less than overwhelming support of BID operations. In addition, the report charged some BIDs with such improprieties as paying excessive salaries to BID managers (a swipe at Biederman), employing illegal aliens, conflicts of interest, excessive spending on administration, and lax management. The report recommends that a vote be taken on the continuation of a BID every five years, and threatens regulation if BIDs don't improve their accountability to their members and the public at large.

But property owners say the report is based on a sloppily conducted survey, and one looks in vain in it for evidence of systemic problems that might require government intervention. The improprieties alleged in some of the outlying BIDs remain hotly disputed; the complaints about the midtown BIDs center on a rehash of the "goon squad" lie. And the council's report holds BIDs to a standard of accountability and efficiency that city government can only dream of achieving. Unless more persuasive evidence of member dissatisfaction surfaces, the current procedures for operating a BID—which already provide for extensive public and governmental oversight, including political appointees on their boards—should remain in place. Above all, it would be a gross mistake to let the City Council get its hands on the BIDs, so it can do for BIDs what it and other branches of city government have done for New York.

BIDs have channeled an enormous amount of private-sector energy toward the solution of public problems. They have disproved the notion that the public interest and private interests necessarily conflict. And in a city that has often been swayed by anti-business sentiment, BIDs have given business a needed voice in the provision of city services. BIDs may also offer some lessons for the future. They suggest the advantages of giving smaller areas of the city more control over the raising and spending of revenues. And they point further in the direction of privatizing city services.

Perhaps one day BIDs will not be necessary. But for now, as Dan Biederman says, they "provide the West Berlin to the city's East Berlin." ●

Decencies for Skeptics

Roger Scruton

Is religion necessary to make a moral society? No; but reverence is.

Behind the 1994 Republican congressional triumph was a hunger for moral absolutes. To the conservative conscience, the virtues praised by our liberal elites are the vices that undermine society. What the liberal sees as toleration, the conservative sees as complicity in wrongdoing; what the liberal sees as compassion for the weak and the needy, the conservative sees as the rewarding of irresponsible behavior. Illegitimacy, welfare dependency, divorce and marital breakdown—even the rise in drug abuse and crime—strike the conservative as exactly what you must expect when the stern morality of duty gives way to the sentimental morality of "caring." When every attempt to impose standards is greeted as a form of discrimination, when the only response to social failure is to multiply the rights and curtail the responsibilities of those whose actions are the cause of it, and when the greatest sin is the sin of disapproval, then is it surprising if society begins to fall apart? It is all very well for liberals to lament the social catastrophe of the inner cities. But if every attempt to tell the truth about it is condemned as racist, sexist, or just plain judgmental, how can the situation be changed?

There is a growing tendency among American conservatives to blame our present condition not merely on the liberals but on the secular and skeptical philosophy of the Enlightenment, from which modern liberalism descends. As they see it, the problem arises from two sources: first, the constant questioning of established beliefs and authorities, to the point where nothing makes sense—not even the question. Second, the emphasis on rights: as though the whole business of social life were a matter of claims against others, for which no payment need be made. The combination of these ideas leads to a kind of nihilism. If social life is a matter of rights, then there must be some authority whose business it is to enforce them. But if all authority is suspect, then so is this one. We are set upon a path that has anarchy as its only destination.

Many conservatives therefore suggest that we must repudiate the Enlightenment and reaffirm the thing against which the Enlightenment stood: organized religion. This is the burden of the new conservative journals, such as *Crisis* and *First Things*; and the message is echoed by older and once skeptical publications like *Commentary* and *The Public Interest*. It is not hard to sympathize. Religious belief fills our world with an authority that cannot be questioned and from which all our duties flow. No better device has ever occurred to the human race for the quelling of selfish appetites and the transmission of moral ideas.

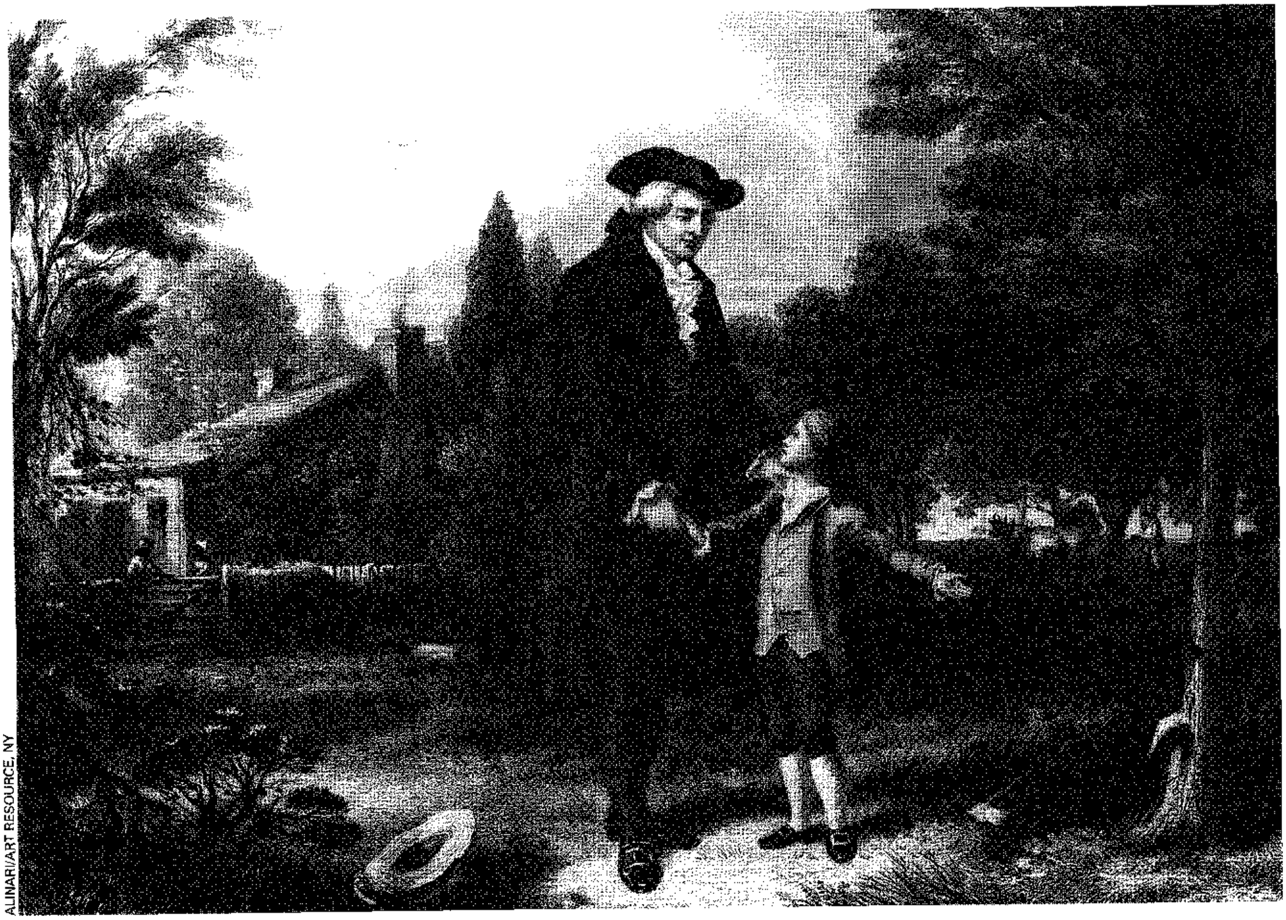
Human reason, in which the Enlightenment rested all its hopes, has shown itself singularly embarrassed in its attempts to come up with a substitute. Kant attempted to derive all morality from the Categorical Imperative, which tells me to act only on that maxim that I can will as a universal law. But Kant's magnificent system raises moral duty to such a height of abstraction that it seems to break free from the world of real temptations and float serenely in the intellectual stratosphere. Even if it is true that I must obey the Categorical Imperative, this does not provide me with the daily bread of moral feeling as I pick my way through a crowd of selfish strangers. The Kantian morality is too cool, too reasonable, too detached from the contending emotions over which it claims to legislate. There may indeed be those who live by it, but they are not the people who are likely to cause the social disorder of which conservatives complain. For the mass of mankind, evil appetites must be blocked by some countervailing fear. And whence comes this fear, if not from a religion?

The religion that is esteemed by the conservative conscience is a religion that has lost its vital force and become routinized.

Yet there is something despondent in the search for a religious solution to the problems of secular society. All too often, the search is conducted in a spirit of despair by people who are as infected by the surrounding nihilism as those whose behavior they wish to rectify. Their message is simple: "God is dead—but don't spread it around." Such words can be whispered among friends but not broadcast to the multitude. It is true that Disraeli, like many nineteenth-century conservatives, combined private skepticism with public endorsement of the established church. But he lived at a time when religion had such vitality that public opinion was still shocked by those, like Nietzsche, who protested against its power. Since that time, too many people have heard of the death of God, and too many people have built an empire of appetite upon this unsubstantiated rumor. The genie of skepticism can't be re-imprisoned in its bottle.

Besides, as all conservatives know, the religious instinct is too vast and deep a force to be conjured from the depths to which it has retreated without at the same time jeopardizing a host of precious achievements—religious freedom itself being one of them. Those who call for a religious revival are not, as a rule, galvanized by images of the Crusades, the Inquisition, or the burning of heretics. The only religious revival reshaping modern society—Islamic fundamentalism—has about as much appeal for a Western conservative as a visit from Ghengis Khan. In fact, the religion that is esteemed by the conservative conscience is precisely a religion that has lost its vital force and become something quieter, more routinized, less all-embracing in its demands than is typical of a newfound faith. It is a religion typified by Christianity and Judaism in their latter days, tempered by the necessary toleration of urban life and nourished by the ordinary decencies of a law-abiding community.

Like many English conservatives, I look back with nostalgia to the Christian heritage passed on to me through church and school. The religion that I absorbed made little distinction between the law of God and the law of England. It referred to Christ's passion only in order to remind me that the stiff upper lip has an irreproachable precedent. It filled my thoughts with gospel stories and parables, the standard interpretation of which coincided with the Boy Scout's code of honor. It taught me that faith was a useful acquisition, but not one to show off about or with which to embarrass your neighbors. Religion is fine in its place but should not be imposed on others. Besides, faith is honest



ALINARI/ART RESOURCE, NY

George Washington could not tell a lie.

only when freely chosen, and for an Englishman honesty is the best policy.

It was 2,000 years of history that had reduced Christianity to this gentle adjunct of the legal order—a history in which the Enlightenment had played its own special part. Insensibly, though not without public convulsions, religion had retreated to the private sphere. Like the English monarchy, it had become a family affair, to be referred to in public only in vague and disclaiming terms—like one's parents. It was esteemed as a mark of respectability rather than an expression of faith. You felt safe with other Christians, not because you stood together in the light of God's radiance (though you were prepared to admit that some such embarrassing thing might be true), but because Christians had adopted a common set of guidelines, whose ruling principle was decency. Jews, too, were okay—at least, you could do business with them, though sometimes with an uneasy conscience about the past. Like English Christianity, the Jewish religion seemed to be a family matter and to translate into the same standards of public behavior. A Judeo-Christian society was one in which the good conduct of others could be taken for granted, in which no one meddled in your private life unless by invitation, and in which those who did not play the game were dealt with discreetly but firmly by the Invisible Headmaster.

The political philosophy of the Enlightenment made a great show of its ancient origins. For thinkers like Montesquieu and Rousseau, as for Machiavelli, the task was to rediscover the Roman virtues and to rescue society from the grip of the Christian Church. But this very project is a Christian one. The medievals also had engaged in it, attempting to encapsulate in a civil code the injunction once expressed by Christ, that we should render unto God what is God's, but unto Caesar what is Caesar's. Indeed, Christianity is an exception among religions, in imposing a religious duty to construct a civil order in which religion plays no part: an order in which the conscience is free, and in which public safety is entrusted to an impartial and secular law.

The inevitable result of this is that religion, lacking the loud public endorsement of its youth, gradually dwindles. And then, too late, we come to see that, after all, the purely secular state is unworkable; that religion, chased into the private sphere, curls up and dies; and that without religion, law and morality lose their authority.

How should we react to this potentially tragic turn of events? The conservative invocation of religion is itself an Enlightenment reaction. For what is invoked is not religion, in all its raw and all-embracing absoluteness, but the image of religion, held in the aspic of a law-governed state. In the great years of Western expansion, religion was a civilizing influence for the very reason that it had thrown in its lot with civilization and recognized the secular rule of law as one of its own achievements. This was its strength, and also its weakness. Civilized man had built a house that needed no blazing fire to heat it.

But it is hard to dampen down the flames of faith and still to keep them burning. Rather than shivering in the cold, modern man has preferred to set the house on fire and dance for a moment in the final conflagration. This explains, I believe, the great tragedy that ensued when Europe woke up to its loss of faith. For modern life—the life among strangers—is a lonely affair and is only with difficulty sustainable in the absence of faith. In such conditions those who offer substitutes, in which the denial of God replaces the belief in him, gain a hearing that bears no relation to the reasonableness of their message. Look back to the two great crimes of our century—nazism and communism—and you will see what happens when a substitute religion bursts upon the world, untempered by the belief in God's judgment. Never before has such destruction, or such contempt for human life, visited our planet.

The Enlightenment cast doubt over every doctrine of the Church, and modern science has continued the work of disenchantment. Christianity has been especially vulnerable in this confrontation, on account of its metaphysical ambition. Most religions stifle our metaphysical questions with myths—such as the wonderful story of man's creation and fall that opens the Hebrew Bible. Christianity responds with the opening words of Saint John: in the beginning was the word, the Logos, the ultimate explanation that closes all inquiry and blows all myths away. The new religion was the offspring of Jewish monotheism and Greek philosophy. It offered to explain the world, its creator, the course of history and man's final end, in terms of an all-embracing theology. It was bound to find itself, in time, competing with science, and has lost out in the contest.

But the religious attitude can exist in the absence of doctrinal support, and while making only the vaguest of metaphysical claims. Jewish writers like Leon Kass have pointed out that their traditional religion is encapsulated more by the exact performance of sacred ritual than by the conscious endorsement of doctrine. And there are other and more telling examples. Traditional Chinese religion lays great stress on rituals, from the exact performance of which our ancestors are supposed to benefit. But it makes few if any doctrinal claims and has virtually no theology. Its fundamental conception is not faith or doctrine but "propriety"—*li*, the written character for which is made up of two separate signs, one signifying "spiritual being" and the other "a sacrificial vessel." Ancient Chinese contained no word for religion, but spoke instead of "teachings," of which there were three: Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, none of which offers any clear belief in a transcendental deity. Rather than venturing into the realm of theology, the Chinese were content with an unassuming piety, in which respect for ancestors was the core idea.

The word "piety" comes to us from the Romans, who, by recognizing a changing multitude of gods, implied that it was of no great importance whether you actually believed in them. In those days you could even become a god, by means as devious as those employed to obtain an earthly title. It is hard to believe that the average Roman took the gods very seriously when his emperor could arbitrarily declare himself to be one of them. But this did not remove the respect for sacred things on which, to the Roman mind, civil order depended. It was still necessary to invoke the *lares et penates* (the household deities), to treat old age with reverence and new life with awe. It was still necessary to consecrate the most important happenings—birth, marriage, death, and membership in a community—to something higher than one's own desire. Social obligations arose not from contracts only but from solemn vows, and a kind of eternal jurisdiction was implied in this—as in the fate of "pious Aeneas," as he departed forever from the flames of Troy. Virgil's hero had vowed to perpetuate his race and culture by founding the city of Rome; and his piety consists in an inability to forget this vow, which follows him on his travels, canceling every wish that wars with it.

If I were to venture a definition of this Roman piety, I should describe it as the attitude that leads the present generation to defer to the last one and to assume responsibility for the next. The true religious attitude is revealed less in the search for beliefs and doctrines than in the day-to-day routine of duty, in which ritual and ceremony play a real but undemanding part. It is revealed in the habit of placing a frame around the important happenings, of lifting them above themselves and discovering the hidden endorsement of vanished generations, and the hidden promise of those to come.

The Roman example is relevant for us, who are surrounded by the same multiplicity of idols and subject to the same disbelief in their divinity. It is still possible for us, in modern conditions, to cultivate a habit of piety, while being skeptical toward religious doctrine. The change in education that we should regret more than any other is not the destruction of religious instruction, school prayers, and hymn singing—even though this destruction was a singular triumph of short-sighted liberal dogmatism. We should most of all regret the virtual abolition of classical languages and literature. For it is Horace, Virgil, Cicero, and Homer who taught our ancestors what piety means and what it still might mean for those who live without the clear pronouncements of a common faith.

As the Chinese and the Romans acknowledged, piety involves respect for the dead. The pious person is the one who acknowledges the generations that have gone before, who does not trample on their remains or tear down their achievements. It is this respect for the dead that prompts the awe with which we enter sacred places or celebrate sacred times. It is manifest in the small things—in custom and ceremony. It is also manifest in the large things: in the sense that certain actions are not to be done, not to be thought about, not to be spoken of, without spiritual danger. We could never understand the prohibition of obscenity and indecency, for example, if we think of them merely in liberal terms—as exercises of the right to free speech, to be praised or condemned according to the good or bad effects on those exposed to them. The goal of pornography is to de-sacralize the sexual act, to detach it from

The principal damage done by liberalism has come from its relentless scoffing at ordinary prohibitions and decencies.

ALINARI/ART RESOURCE, NY

The Titanic: women and children first.

love and commitment, and to put it on sale as a commodity. The continuity of human society can no longer be guaranteed when people see sex in this way. The prohibition arises from the fact that we witness in pornography a threat to the deepest interest of other generations. And such a threat is what we mean, or ought to mean, by sacrilege. It is piety that causes us to recoil when, in the loathsome films of Quentin Tarantino, a person is shot in the face while the worthless culprits make idle conversation. For the purpose of such an image is to annihilate the face, to desecrate that which must always stand apart from the order of matter, if we are to know its meaning.

The principal damage done by liberalism has not been intellectual—for the loss of religious belief could hardly be avoided, once the habit of inquiry had grown in us. The principal damage has come from the relentless scoffing at ordinary prohibitions and decencies, and the shrill advocacy of "alternatives" that ordinary people are unable in their hearts to recognize. The *moral* legacy of liberalism is typified by the Satanism of the Parisian Left Bank, by the play-group egoism of the Californian campus, and by the patrician complacency of the *New York Review of Books*. This moral legacy could be discarded tomorrow, were there not such a vested interest in preserving it. Liberal sarcasm is the ideology of a ruling class—the class of "advisors," who inhabit the universities, the government commissions, and the state bureaucracies, and whose control over the channels of communication ensures that their superfluousness will never be publicly acknowledged.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that religious belief provides the only antidote to this ideology. Whatever the state of their religious convictions, people are unconsciously aware that the customs of society embody more wisdom than could emerge in a single generation. They may struggle against this awareness, as liberals do. But it is far more reasonable, far more congenial, to acquiesce in it. The decencies and hesitations that once surrounded sex, for instance, are not the arbitrary injunctions of a departed ruling class. They are the voice of the collective dead, alerting us to a duty that we could never hope to understand through our own experience alone, and the questioning of which is the height of folly. Modern America has questioned this duty and is now paying a heavy price for its presumption. Even if the genie is out of the bottle and nobody has any clear idea how it might be coaxed back in, it is surely only a naive faith in human ingenuity that would lead anyone to think that sexual liberation has been anything but a disaster.

Those who hope to safeguard "natural piety" through a return to religious faith jeopardize the thing they treasure. For they make piety as irrational as the beliefs to which they attach it. But piety is not irrational at all. It is the voice that tells us that the goods of society are inherited and could never be rediscovered by the generation that foolishly rejects them. The true conservative should be prepared to acknowledge that his audience lives in modern times. Religious belief is a bonus that we cannot assume. But piety is a social necessity; it speaks of duties that lie above and beyond our desires and contracts. If people cease to recognize such duties, society will crumble into "the dust and powder of individuality," as Burke described it.

Conservatives should therefore be gentle with their unbelieving colleagues. It may be right to hope for a religious revival, but not to work for it. The conservative task in the modern world is to scoff at the scoffers, to ridicule the prejudice against all that Burke praised under the rubric of "prejudice," and to support the institutions in which piety is born. What, in modern life, carries the spirit of history? To what school or club or college should our children belong, in order to acquire the deep-down awareness that the world was not born with them, and that their happiness depends upon the approval of people who are no longer living?

Conservatives in America are beginning to confront these questions, whether or not they conceive them in religious terms. They are beginning to recognize the damage done to their country by the liberal prejudice in favor of the living and their "rights." They know that crime, drugs, illegitimacy, and divorce all stem from a single cause: the inability to recognize obligations that are stronger than desire.

But they also know that the old religions will not take an effective stand against these things.

Piety is the voice that tells us the goods of society are inherited and can't be rediscovered by the generation that foolishly rejects them.

Rather than retreating from the Enlightenment, therefore, conservatives should confront liberal ideas on their own ground. The real question is not "How do you justify authority?" but "How do you justify rights?" Maybe there *are* no rights; and maybe the whole idea of equality is an illusion. If that is so, then the liberal assumption of the moral and intellectual high ground is spurious. We are faced with a confrontation not between enlightenment and prejudice but between two kinds of prejudice. The conservative policy in this encounter should be to support the prejudice of ordinary people. Liberals will be contemptuous of such a policy, since the prejudices of enlightened people never seem like prejudice to those who entertain them. But the contempt of liberals is something that conservatives must learn to endure. ◆

J. Crew U.

Kay S. Hymowitz

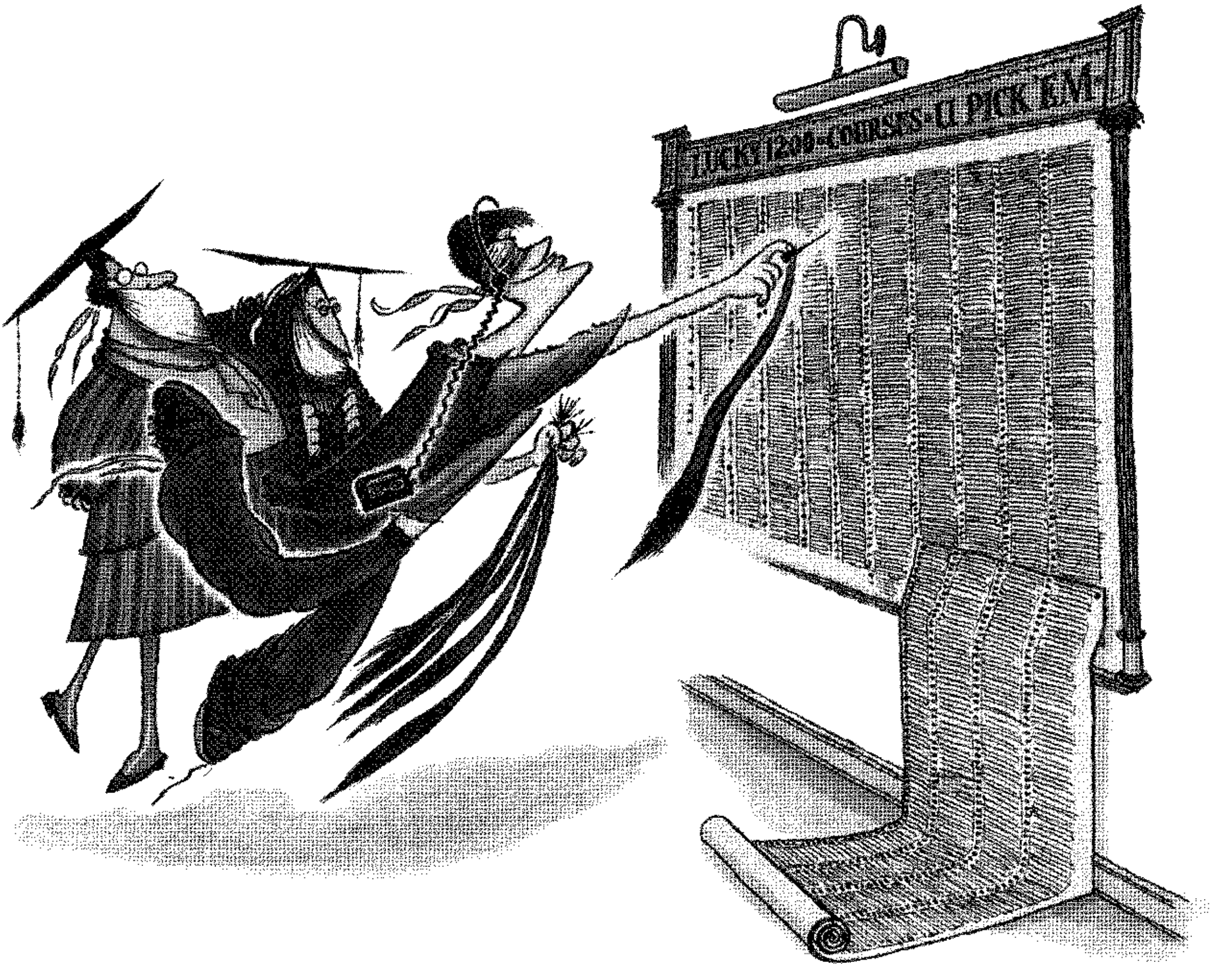
Most parents setting out to choose a college for their son or daughter are probably prepared for a campus vastly changed from their own day. Coed dorms, date-rape hot lines, diversity sensitivity groups, and most notably multiculturalism will surprise no one half-conscious during the past decade. Somewhat obscured behind the contentiousness of these changes, though, is a related, equally momentous shift: the complete disappearance of a fixed, coherent curriculum and with it any shared notion of the well-educated man or woman. All that once ordered higher education—requirements, majors, the traditional disciplines, the core curriculum—is vanishing into the chaos of postmodernism. "The closer one looks, the more arguments about 'the' university curriculum splinter into a zillion courses," writes Russell Jacoby in *Dogmatic Wisdom*. "There is no curriculum." It is as if Americans have stood around arguing about who was going to drive while a thief sped off with the car.

Colleges' glitzy advertising brochures promise a curriculum of boundless variety. And that's the problem: without a common body of knowledge, too many students are getting an empty education.

Critics of the academy from both the left and the right have rightly bemoaned the current curriculum—if that is even the word for it—as fragmentated and incoherent. Yet out of the smoldering curricular ruins has inevitably arisen an organizing force of sorts. That force is simply the individual student or, as we used to say in my house during the especially trying days of early parenthood, Himself: his whims, his desires, his inchoate (and, to be honest, frequently flawed) judgment, or—in the portentous words of the glossy PR materials that now chase any student with a respectable showing on his PSAT—his "individual educational needs." The admissions director from Wesleyan proudly summed it up at a college-night talk at my son's high school. An applicant asked what the director thought the university's biggest problem was. "Our biggest problem is also our greatest strength," he replied enthusiastically. "Students are on their own. They have to figure things out for themselves. We're not going to tell them what they should study or what they should be."

Many parents, living with kids whose idea of what they want to study might be more easily satisfied at a downtown dance club than a campus lecture hall, might wonder how institutions devoted to the education of late adolescents can demonstrate so little grasp of their nature. Indeed, the college advertisements depict a student as unreal, as idealized, as the smiling, handsomely outfit-

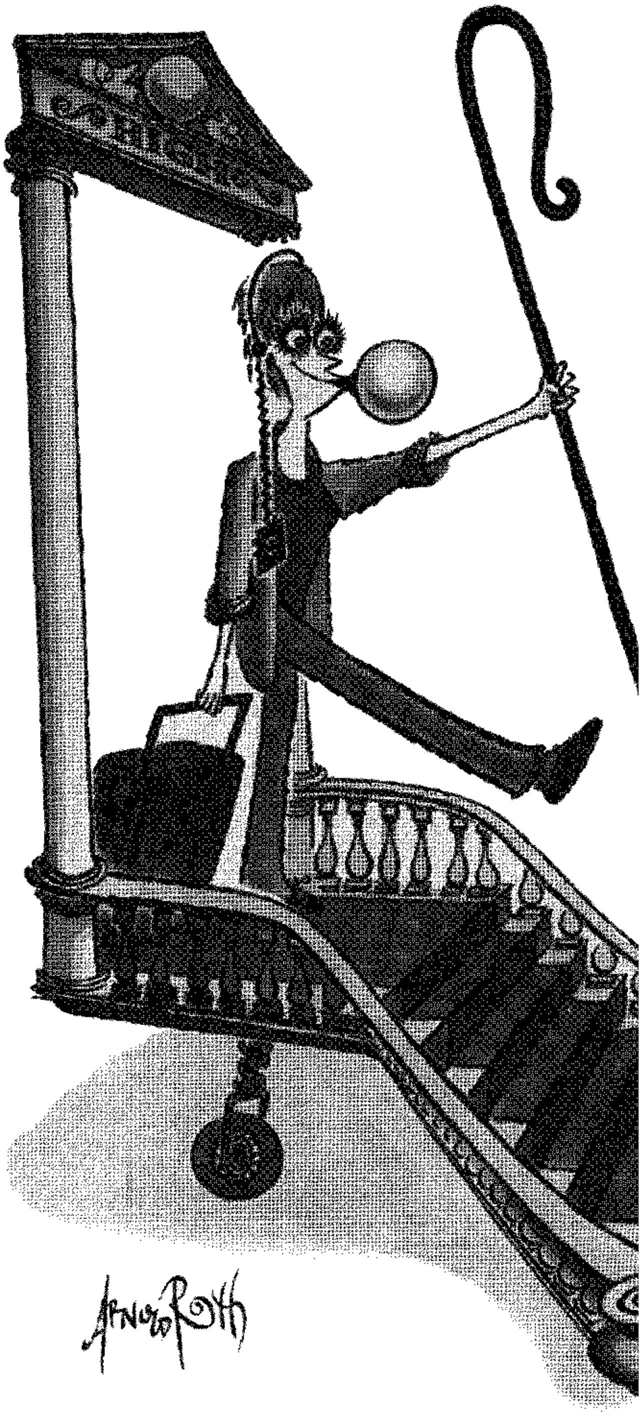
Illustrations by Arnold Roth



ted models in the J. Crew catalogs these documents so resemble. And the brochures also hint at the deeper weakness at the heart of the do-your-own-thing curriculum. For the academy is spawning a perilous myth for its still-developing charges: that they can, in all their ripe perfection, step outside society and each create his own one-man culture.

The college brochures yield plenty of examples of how the academy has tried to transform the shattering of the curriculum into a boon for students. These materials are laden with what a postmodernist given to self-reflection might term a discourse of contemporary American desire. *Flexibility, openness, independence, freedom*: the language of the promotional literature is so uniform, it seems that every admissions office from Occidental to Harvard has uploaded the same public relations software program. Grinnell, enthuses a member of the class of '97 in the Iowa school's recruitment material, a fine example of the genre, "offers something most schools don't. . . . It gives you the chance to be in charge of your education." "Students are independent," proclaims the director of admissions. "Free from core requirements, they design programs that fulfill their own educational needs."

Nor do the elite schools have any higher vision to offer of the purpose of college education. "We have no requirements," announced the admissions director from Amherst during a college-night sales pitch. Pause for the good news to sink in: "No requirements." (She was not being 100 percent honest. Like many schools, Amherst requires an interdisciplinary team-taught freshman seminar—about which more later.) Admissions people at Smith, Vassar, Wellesley, and Brown, the school that under the prodding of Ira Magaziner first gave us the libertarian curriculum, could claim much the same. To put it in plain English, college students can do just about whatever they want. No wonder Camille Paglia compares college today to summer camp.



The sheer proliferation of courses, a kind of sorcerer's apprentice approach to the curriculum, amplifies the illusion of undergraduate freedom. The University of Pennsylvania boasts a mind-numbing 2,000 courses but is easily—in fact, literally—outclassed by nearby Rutgers, with 4,000. On a smaller scale, this kind of variety was always a selling point in larger universities. But today smaller schools also strive for the mega-curriculum. Amherst now boasts 600 offerings—but will have to try harder if it wants to compete with Washington and Lee. "In 1985, the *Washington Post* noted that 'Washington and Lee's 700-course catalogue is the envy of many larger institutions,'" proudly states the brochure for this Virginia school. "In the decade since that quote appeared, the curriculum has grown to include more than 900 different courses." Following this progression, the next decade might find this small liberal arts college (enrollment: 1,620) with more courses than students.

True, most brochures refer to something called "distribution requirements": students must take two or three courses from several general categories, most commonly the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences and math. But the hundreds or thousands of choices available to students stretch the distribution requirement to the borders of triviality—and beyond. The natural sciences and math requirement, for instance, can be satisfied at many schools by courses like "Ethno-Biology" or "Math for the Artist." Furthermore, according to a forthcoming study by the National Association of Scholars titled

"The Dissolution of General Education: 1914–1993," introductory courses are fast disappearing. A typical undergrad can easily receive his first and only taste of sociology, say, by studying not Durkheim and Weber but battered women in India.

In other words, students spend their four years browsing the Shopping Mall University, to borrow a phrase from a 1985 book, *The Shopping Mall High School*, that describes the same trend in secondary schools. There they are free to try on whatever looks enticing—Shakespearean plays or mulatto novels, thirties America or Ming dynasty China. Michael Moffatt, an anthropologist who lived among Rutgers students in the eighties and published his findings in a book titled *Coming of Age in New Jersey*, found that Rutgers's distribution formula, which requires a major, a minor, and a mini, one from each of three categories—Humanities/Languages, Social Studies, and Science/Mathematics—doesn't preclude a rigorous curriculum in, say, English, history, and physics. However, it also allows a student to choose a major in dance, a minor in sports studies, and a mini in meteorology.

The ideal student is so full of commitment as barely to be contained within ivy walls; he is equally at home in soup kitchens or Paris cafés.

Though the groaning board of curricular offerings promises satisfaction for every taste and desire, the colleges have not fully escaped one tiresome demand on their students: the major. And where there are majors, there must be requirements, right? But potential applicants need not worry; this wrinkle won't constrain their individuality. Most schools, no matter how small, boast majors in the mid to high double digits; the State University of New York at Albany, which calls itself "A Place for Individuals," is on the low side with 53 majors compared, say, with Rutgers with 100. But beyond that, colleges also invite students to create their own majors. The term major is now sometimes qualified into "major" in voguish postmodern fashion, a message to 17-year-old applicants that they should remember that the traditional disciplines are social inventions of dubious value and, as such, a potential barrier to personal expression.

It's rare to find a school that doesn't now promise "Our Unique Interdisciplinary Program" or, as Carnegie Mellon more grandly calls it, "The Freedom of Interdisciplinary Programs." "Our unique Teaching Program of the University Professors," announces the Boston University admissions department, "allows interested students to design their own courses of study, often bridging the gap left by traditional majors." At the University of Pennsylvania, they just come out and say it: "Students . . . are able to combine their interests, even if they are seemingly unrelated." "Our curriculum is uniquely open," proclaims the classy brochure from Eugene Lang College of the New School, its dusty blue, pink, and purple lettering on a sleek black background befitting its downtown image. "Students design their own programs. . . ."

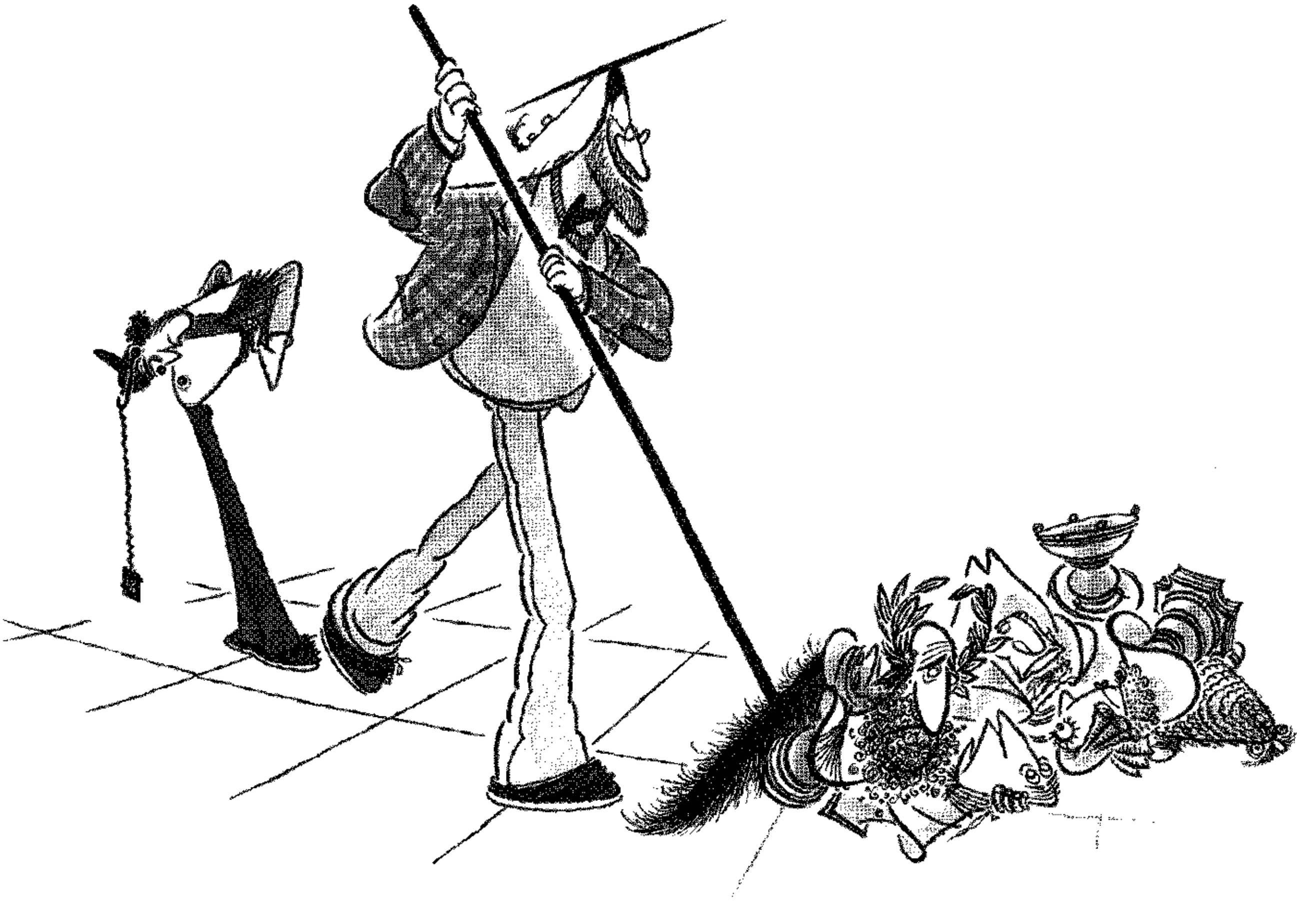
With all this uniqueness it may be surprising to find that eight pounds of college brochures (literally—I weighed them) from schools as diverse as Albright and Amherst still tend to sketch, much like the fashion catalogs that appear so to have influenced them, a remarkably similar picture of the model undergrad in their student blurbs. It's an appealing picture, to be sure. He is intensely curious, eager to "explore" the universe of the mega-curriculum. At the same time, this ideal student is so full of passion and commitment as barely to be contained within ivy walls. He is both cosmopolitan and socially committed, equally at home in soup kitchens and Paris cafés, Indian reservations and Japanese teahouses. Above all else, he is "creative," a word that is so much a cliché among American educationists these days that it has truly earned deconstructive quotation marks. Released from the chains of required courses and traditional disciplines, the model student soars into the unknown, discovering "new perspectives." This student is a new Renaissance man or woman gliding gracefully between the sciences and the arts, making what the Fall 1995 *Brandeis Review* calls "Curricular Connections: Tools for Genius." Every student may be an island—but what a magnificent island, what a fertile island.

These model kids sound prodigiously impressive. Franklin and Marshall showcases one student who traveled to Jerusalem to study the theological manuscripts of Sir Isaac Newton and another who went to Tanzania to make a documentary film on homeless children. Yet these blurbs sometimes have the breathless, romantic quality of a slush-pile movie script—which should give pause to those who look back on their college years with a clear eye. Take this description by a class of '95 Connecticut College graduate, a narrative worth quoting at length: "In the classroom, my learning crossed disciplines. . . . I designed two independent studies . . . and as Georgia O'Keefe once said, 'began to voice things in my head that are not like what anyone has taught me.' A deep personal interest in American Indian issues and economic development surfaced this year through an independent study in the economics department and an internship at the nearby Mashantucket Pequot reservation. . . . In September I will go seek my fortunes in Missoula, Montana. There, I hope to work on the Flathead Indian Reservation on economic development, learn to play cello, collect tacky magnets, and drive a truck. Who knows? Maybe I'll take up fly fishing and marry a cowboy."

The dreaminess of this scenario is no accident. For the libertarian curriculum and the discourse of freedom and independence that have nurtured this Emma Bovary of the nineties are mythological to the core. The myth of the college brochure begins with an illusory student: not just independent but self-motivated, passionate, self-aware, well-informed. Consider instead the reality of the college student just graduated from an American public school. Now he must decide how best to meet his educational needs. Surveys suggest he knows little about, among many other things, American history. Does he ponder his ignorance in this area and sign up for an American history course? Of course not. The libertarian curriculum neglects the obvious: the student doesn't know what he doesn't know. Further, he doesn't know what he needs to know to be a well-informed member of society. That's why someone invented required courses.

If, as is undoubtedly the case, some students are guided by "deep personal interests" in choosing their courses—by the passion and drive admissions directors like to celebrate—most are moved by more mundane concerns. Michael Moffatt, the anthropologist who studied Rutgers students, found that they picked their courses not out of passion or even curiosity but after "intricate calculations of and trade-offs of necessity, interest, convenience, availability, and difficulty." In the glossy brochures, students may seek new challenges; in the dorms, they cross off demanding professors and no-time-for-breakfast 9 AM classes. Denied any clear vision of the purpose of a general education, students, Moffatt found, divided Rutgers's mega-curriculum "in a very simple way. There were useful subjects, subjects that presumably led to good careers, and there were useless ones," namely the humanities.

This coarse practicality suggests that the socially concerned, activist student may be another ivory-tower fantasy character rather than a flesh-and-blood undergrad. A longitudinal study by the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute begun in 1985 found that though political commitment and activism among students increases somewhat during their years on campus, the numbers are unimpressive, and such commitment as there is doesn't last. Twenty-four percent of seniors cited a "desire to influence politics" as an important goal, up from 19 percent when these same students were freshmen. A mere four years after graduation, the number had plummeted to 14 percent. Similarly, 27 percent of freshmen called "participating in community action programs" an important goal. This number had increased to 35 percent by the time they were seniors but had dipped to 23 percent four years later. Evidently, the modest number of students



influenced by campus politics remember their lessons about social activism about as long as they remember Anthropology 101.

This may be because in the real world, unlike the J. Crewland of the college brochure, kids tend to follow what their elders do rather than what they say. Professors may mouth elevated precepts about social justice, but they also serve as a good model for the crude vocationalism that Moffatt and many others have noted. Students learn it in the many courses designed by professors more interested in developing a paper for the next conference in San Diego than in educating the next generation. The boutique freshman seminar, one of the few required courses left in many schools, reads like a card catalog of recently completed dissertations and books and articles in progress, with salable, career-boosting titles like "Sisterhood in Contemporary Literature" or "Animal Rights and Wrongs."

But students' careerism and disengagement can only very partially be blamed on individual professors who are, after all, laboring in a system that values success on the conference circuit over good teaching in the classroom. The truth is, these qualities are inevitable consequences of the solipsism inherent in the shopping mall curriculum. Hundreds, if not thousands, of courses train today's students in the mystique of specialization, which renders archaic the entire notion of a shared world of knowledge. Over four years, each student may well have enrolled in more than 30 classes entirely different not just from those of his roommate but from those of his entire dormitory. The freshman seminar can have as many listings as a small-town phone book—75 different possibilities at the University of Pennsylvania, for instance. Notes a student from Grinnell: "I always find it mildly ironic that the one course everyone at this college is 'forced' to take turns out to be the one thing that presents students with the most diverse individual set of experiences."

Such an approach, with its glorification of unencumbered autonomy and individual choice, provides no foundation for social solidarity and active citizenship. For one thing, students in all likelihood will graduate without any real grasp of their nation's history or its intellectual or cultural traditions, now lumped with the "useless" humanities. The sovereign, solitary undergraduate learns that he wanders in a universe of his own making, rather than in what the authors of *Habits of the Heart* call a "community of memory." Having undermined any means of evoking in their students a sense of a shared past or a shared destiny, professors instead attempt to instill feelings of *élite oblige*, for the homeless, say, or for AIDS patients. Sure, concern for the downtrodden is an essential part of our civic obligation; but the amnesiac, however compassionate, does not a citizen make.

And here is the underlying irony of the libertarian mega-curriculum. Contemporary academics like to speak of "de-centering" or "subverting" the individual. The autonomous self is a fiction, they aver; the "individual" is but a passive medium through which the voices of gender, class, race, and ethnicity recite their ideologies. Yet oddly enough, those same professors have promoted an educational system that exalts the autonomous individual—the green, inchoate, adolescent individual at that. In demolishing the notion of a relatively stable body of knowledge, a traditional set of disciplines to which developing thinkers must apprentice themselves, they have invited their students, though half-formed and ill educated, to indulge in a fantasy of their own extravagant powers. Here is how the dean of admissions describes the academic experience at his reputable liberal arts college: "At Franklin and Marshall, we don't hand you a packaged education. We help you identify the materials for your own educational endeavors; you then develop skills with which you can mold those materials most creatively and effectively." The "packaged education," which I take to mean the vanquished core curriculum of literature, philosophy, and the arts and sciences, is translated into "materials" on which the young can exercise their "creativity," as if they were giants standing on the shoulders of dwarfs. The legacy of the past has no real power over our young talents: it is merely a set of "tools for genius."

In this sense, one could reasonably argue that the current curriculum is more anti-cultural than multicultural. While some professors may rail about the hold of race and gender on identity, the structure of the education they have invented gives a very different message: that the past has no weight. It is not a living presence in which each of us is inextricably embedded. Rather, it is bunk, a barrier to self-fulfillment. This shrugging attitude toward the past is epitomized by both the relentless presentism and topicality of today's college courses and the blurring of the traditional disciplines. Yet by promoting a skeptical attitude toward the very idea of an independently existing, historically continuous reality, the postmodernists seduce the next generation into imagining themselves as having stepped outside cultural constraint, precisely the opposite of what they profess to believe possible.

If these ideas sound vaguely familiar, that's because they hark back to an American tradition embodied most strongly by Emerson and Thoreau. "Why should we grope among the dry bones of the past?" asked Emerson. "Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?" In short, the ideal of the individual released from history and social identity, and creating his own reality, has a fine American pedigree. This ideal may be highly problematic as the foundation for an educational philosophy and, for that matter, as the basis for a coherent culture. Still, don't count on Emerson's ideas' becoming the subject of intelligent debate. Most students, ignorant of the past he epitomizes, look as if they will simply be condemned to repeat it. So much for the freedom and creativity of the next generation. •

The Wasted Waterfront

CORBIS-BETTMANN

Kenneth Silber

Throughout the world, a shoreline often is the centerpiece of a city, the scene of its grandest architectural achievements, the location of its most valuable and attractive property. The particulars vary, the product of local history and geography. Paris and London bring to mind picture-postcard images of the Seine and the Thames winding their way past historic monuments and centers of government; Hong Kong evokes visions of gleaming skyscrapers towering over the South China Sea; Barcelona leaves memories of the shops, theaters, and Olympic stadium that overlook the Mediterranean. Sydney is synonymous with its breathtaking harbor, surrounded by museums, restaurants, a zoo, the world-famous Opera House, and the most expensive homes in the city. So too in the United States: think of Chicago's "gold coast" of parkland and fancy apartment buildings along the shore of Lake Michigan; Baltimore's Inner Harbor, a thriving hub of tourism and business featuring the city's convention center and the National Aquarium; Boston's downtown waterfront, with hotels and housing alongside the popular Faneuil Hall Marketplace of shops and restaurants; even Cleveland's Lake Erie shoreline, with the new Rock and Roll Hall of Fame set amid parkland and public esplanades.

By lamentable contrast, New York City's waterfront has come to be regarded by New Yorkers mostly as a place to find cheap parking or to retrieve one's car from a municipal tow pound, or simply as a wasteland of rotting piers, homeless encampments, garbage dumps, empty lots, and vacant warehouses to be avoided altogether. Bordering the city's vast, intricate network of waterways, from the Hudson River to the Upper New York Bay to the Gowanus Canal, the New York waterfront largely languishes as a peripheral, forgotten slum.

As the waterfront has lapsed into inactivity and decay, public and private efforts to revitalize it have confronted formidable political and regulatory barriers. Competing objectives and priorities—new residential development, the creation of parkland and public space, the revival of traditional industry—have mired waterfront projects in controversy and litigation.

New York's vast, neglected shoreline was once central to the city's economic and cultural life. It could be again.

Manhattan's bustling East River waterfront of 1902 . . .

Diverse proposals for development and renewal have run afoul of environmental regulations, zoning rules, and the fiscal constraints and bureaucratic inertia of the public-sector agencies that own large tracts of waterfront land. With plans and ambitions repeatedly thwarted, the waterfront has begun to recede from public and political consciousness, its current squalor accepted as normal or inevitable.

The opportunity squandered is enormous. New York's 578 miles of shoreline—by far the largest urban waterfront in the United States—could make the city more prosperous and more livable. This vast shoreline could accommodate a broad range of uses, from popular parks and prime residential addresses to thriving centers of commerce, industry, and transportation. It could be a richly varied scene of restaurants on piers, of townhouses overlooking marinas, of tree-lined public esplanades with majestic river views. One can imagine hotels with their own docks for guests arriving by boat; small cargo vessels bringing goods directly to stores; water taxis carrying commuters and tourists to numerous points throughout the city.

Some of these possibilities may seem fanciful now, but similar things have been done in other cities or in New York's past—or are taking shape in the city today. In several parts of New York, glimmerings of what is possible are beginning to appear, where entrepreneurial creativity and risk taking have broken through the general waterfront malaise: at Manhattan's Chelsea Piers, for example, where an impressive sports-and-entertainment complex has just opened; in Brooklyn's Red Hook section, where once-derelict commercial sites are coming back to life; on the Hudson and East rivers, along the routes of a resurgent ferry industry.

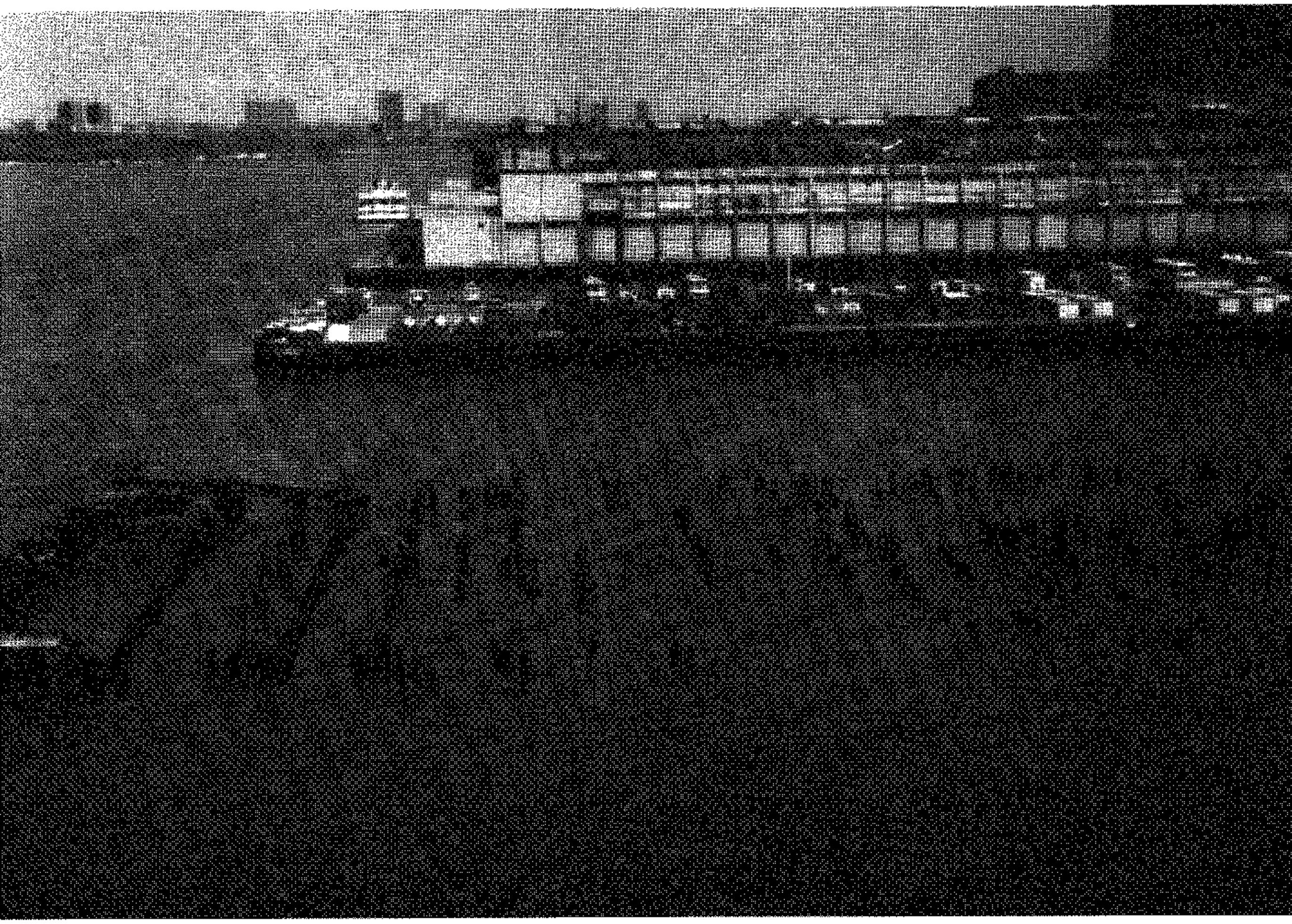
Such developments, led by the private sector, could mark the start of a waterfront renaissance, unlocking not only the economic potential but also the social, cultural, and aesthetic possibilities of the shoreline, New York's most underused and unappreciated asset. Whether that happens, however, will depend on the political and regulatory climate—and on the public's sense of what might be.

During the first half of this century, the shoreline bustled. Manufacturing and other industry lined the water's edge, along with yacht clubs, ferry docks, and recreational piers. The increasingly luxurious ocean liners of the day departed from Chelsea's well-appointed passenger terminals. Cargo ships converged on northern Brooklyn, tugboat-driven barges brought livestock to Manhattan's meat district, and pleasure boats idled in the Harlem River. The deepwater harbor and navigable waterways—crucial reasons why the city was founded and developed here in the first place—remained integral parts of urban life and work.

Yet New York's preeminence as a commercial port did not survive the advent of containerized shipping in the 1960s; much maritime activity migrated from Manhattan and Brooklyn to New Jersey ports whose large open spaces and rail and highway links suited them to the mechanized loading, storage, and transportation of heavy containers. The growing availability of airplanes rather than steamships, of bridges and tunnels instead of ferries, further diminished the vitality of New York's port areas, and the construction of highways and other barriers effectively cut the public off from large sections of the shoreline. Eventually it became possible to live and work in New York with little awareness of one's proximity to the city's vast waterways.

Vestiges of the central role the waterfront once played remain: Riverside Park and Riverside Drive, with their grand Hudson River panoramas, are salient examples, as are office towers of lower Manhattan's financial district and the public esplanade in Brooklyn Heights, with their sweeping harbor views. The elegant River House apartment building on East 52nd Street serves as another reminder of the importance once attached to waterfront property; originally including a dock for the convenience of its boat-owning residents, the building was later separated from the water by the FDR Drive. But it still provides some of the most spectacular East River views in Manhattan.

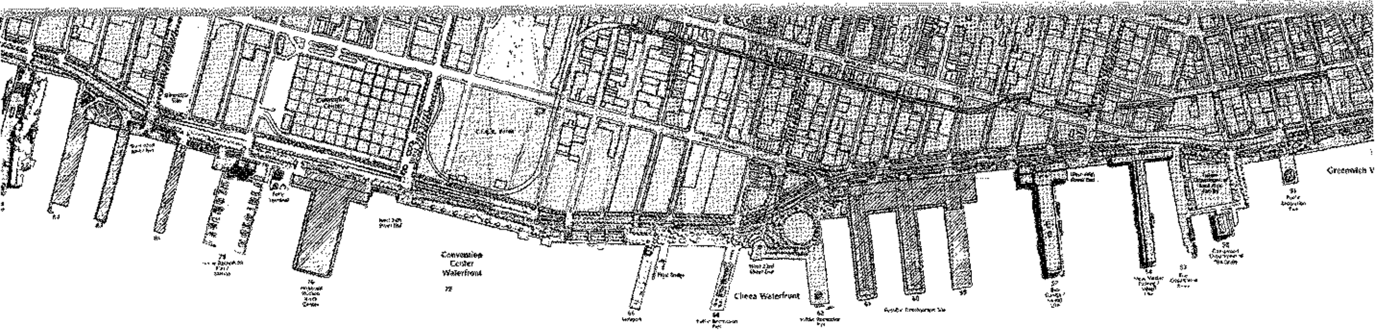
MADOKA TAKAGI/LOWINSKY GALLERY



. . . makes for a depressing contrast with today's wasteland, with its derelict piers and rotting pilings.

Overall, however, today's New York shoreline provides barely a hint of its onetime hum of constant activity—the crowds that once strolled through Manhattan's six officially designated recreational piers, with places for dining and exhibits (called "play piers" by Jacob Riis, who was the driving force behind their creation); the guests who once gazed out over the Narrows from Brooklyn's now-vanished Grand View Hotel, an ornamented building with waterfront balconies and its own dock; the diners who enjoyed a meal overlooking the Hudson at the Claremont Inn, a converted country house that once stood just north of Grant's Tomb; the steam ferries that departed from lower Manhattan to New Jersey, available at 11 points below 24th Street prior to the Holland Tunnel's construction.

Just as the New York waterfront's traditional activities were disappearing, political and regulatory trends were emerging that would end up deterring plans for redevelopment. The city's 1961 zoning resolution designated about a third of the shoreline for shipping and manufacturing at the very moment that such activities were about to decline sharply. An ever-expanding



range of federal and state environmental regulations, for land and water, began to complicate waterfront development further. Political and community opposition began to form toward projects deemed too large, too commercial, or too environmentally insensitive. And more and more waterfront property fell under public-sector ownership, where all too often it would lie dormant.

The most ambitious proposal to transform New York's waterfront—one whose failure would have lasting repercussions—was Westway, the highway and development project announced in 1974 by state and federal officials for Manhattan's West Side. Originally conceived by the Regional Plan Association, a private group that studies land-use issues, Westway was a truly visionary idea: a highway running through a tunnel under 181 acres of new landfill in the Hudson River; on top, there would be development sites and ample parkland extending to the water's edge. The cost: $2.3 billion, to be paid by the federal government.

Yet Westway drew growing resistance from a coalition of West Side residents, environmentalists, and community boards, who opposed everything from the noise and disruption of construction to the impact of new landfill on the Hudson's aquatic life. Westway's opponents seized upon the presence of striped bass in the river as a means of stopping the project, arguing that the removal of deteriorating piers would deprive the fish of needed spawning grounds and "rest stops" for their annual migrations. This dubious argument—which sidestepped the question of how the fish survived in the millennia before the piers were built—succeeded in killing the project.

The law held Westway's planners to an almost impossible standard: they had to prove that the project would not damage the striped bass population. In 1985, after more than a decade of litigation, a federal judge ruled, unsurprisingly, that they had failed to do so. The following year, with endless delays in sight and with Congress poised to withdraw funding, Governor Mario Cuomo and Mayor Edward Koch abandoned the project.

The Westway fight set a citywide pattern of naysaying toward waterfront development by community boards, elected officials, and neighborhood groups, with similar consequences of major projects stalled or abandoned. The Riverwalk, a 1980s plan for 1,800 apartments, two marinas, a hotel, and an office tower for the East River from 16th to 24th Streets, was thwarted by opponents citing a range of environmental and community concerns. Such opposition has repeatedly delayed both Donald Trump's Riverside South, a cluster of parkland and residences for the Upper West Side, and Queens West, a proposed 75-acre enclave of housing, parkland, offices, and hotels for the East River shoreline of Hunters Point, Queens. In Brooklyn Heights, the Port Authority's Piers 1 through 5 and their attached upland have been another area of contention, with proposals for a new park and recreational area stalled by neighborhood recalcitrance.

Meanwhile, the city's zoning rules further stymied waterfront development, with much property still designated exclusively for industry in areas where industrial activity has long been in decline, including many sections of the Brooklyn and Queens shoreline. Lately, the City Planning Department has begun to rectify this problem—for example, by allowing mixed-use development in Hunters Point. But such changes have occurred haltingly, and the costs and red tape involved both for the city and for private applicants seeking zoning changes are heavy. Over the years, moreover, some waterfront properties have fallen into disrepair while developers and city officials endlessly debated their zoning status. The former Eastern District Rail Terminal in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, is a case in point: the 30-acre waterfront lot, site of various proposals for mixed-use development or parkland, has decayed into a wasteland of crumbling buildings, bordered by mounds of garbage from adjacent waste-transfer operations.

Federal and state Superfund laws further complicate waterfront development, for they impose open-ended cleanup requirements and sweeping

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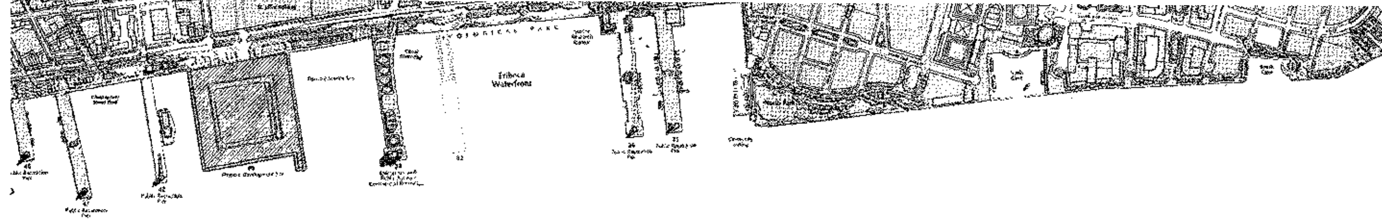
This is the first in a series of articles on Barriers to Building in New York, commissioned by the Manhattan Institute's Center for Civic Innovation.



legal liability on owners and operators of contaminated properties. Faced with the danger of long delays and costly litigation, developers often shun sites with even a hint of contamination, including many old industrial sites located by the water's edge. Some properties, such as a 25-acre Brooklyn waterfront lot near the Gowanus Canal, officially known as "the rear of the Bush Terminal building," languish for years on government lists of contaminated sites, their prospects for development virtually nil—even after inspections have determined that they pose no significant threat to the environment or public health. (See "When Cleanliness Isn't a Virtue," *City Journal*, Autumn 1995.)

Development projects involving "outboard" structures such as piers or platforms, or the use of landfill, must navigate through a thick fog of rules generated by the federal Clean Water Act, state wetlands preservation laws, and federal and state designations of protected fish and wildlife habitats (including, as a result of the Westway fight, expanded protections for the striped bass). Multiple agencies and levels of government must give their approval, making the revamping of existing structures an arduous task and the construction of new ones even harder. Little wonder that projects that would create new landfill or build offshore structures—such as the Riverwalk project for the East River, which would have been built partly on new platforms—are rarely even proposed, let alone completed.

With much of New York's waterfront in development limbo, the 1980s real estate boom largely bypassed the shoreline, even while producing some 50 million square feet of commercial space and 100,000 new housing units elsewhere in the city. Meanwhile, in other cities, notably Baltimore and Boston, waterfront areas bloomed with development. "During the eighties, when nobody was able to get anything off the dime in New York, other cities got a lot done," says Ann Buttenwieser, president of the nonprofit Parks Council and author of *Manhattan Water-Bound*, a history of the borough's shoreline areas.

Baltimore's Inner Harbor, once a rundown area of wharves, produce markets, and railroad yards, now features office towers, hotels, housing, parkland, and marinas, along with the National Aquarium, the Baltimore Convention Center, and Harborplace, a bustling complex of restaurants and small merchants. The result has been a revitalization not only of the waterfront but of nearby downtown Baltimore as well—even a transformation of Baltimore's overall image, making the city into a popular center of tourism and conventions.

While both public and private investment fueled the transformation, the vital spark came from the private sector. The revitalization took shape back in the late 1950s, when the local business community raised funds for the drawing up of a long-term development plan for Baltimore's Charles Center area, adjacent to the waterfront. The plan expanded to include the Inner Harbor, and the city government, private developers, and the Baltimore Development Corporation (a public authority) banded together to make it a reality. The development program also benefited from having begun in the 1960s, prior to federal and other environmental rules that would have complicated the demolition of old Inner Harbor piers.

"During the eighties, when nobody was able to get anything off the dime in New York, other cities got a lot done."

In New York, efforts to create a similar public-private renewal along the downtown waterfront—driven more by the public sector than was the case in Baltimore—have produced the South Street Seaport and Battery Park City, virtually the only large-scale development anywhere on New York's shoreline in the 1980s. The Seaport, a complex of shops, restaurants, and a "museum without walls" of tall ships and other maritime exhibits, opened in 1983 as New York's answer to Baltimore's Harborplace and Boston's Faneuil Hall. Officials brought in the Maryland-based Rouse Company, operator of the other sites, to manage the complex.

Yet unlike the Boston and Baltimore projects, which thrive on their location in busy commercial areas and their proximity to residential sites, the Seaport came into being in an isolated location on the periphery of Manhattan's financial district. And unlike Harborplace and Faneuil Hall, which received ever-growing crowds as private development sprang up around them, the Seaport had the ill fortune of being in a city where, thanks to all the forces already mentioned, a broad trend toward waterfront development was impossible—and could by no means be sparked by this one project alone. Hence, far from revitalizing lower Manhattan, the Seaport has been beset with economic troubles, with high turnover among its retail tenants, and with still-dilapidated buildings in its so-called historic district. City government subsidies now float the maritime exhibits, originally intended to be financed by revenues from the complex's shops.

The Battery Park City project has had more impressive results, creating on lower Manhattan's Hudson River waterfront a beautiful urban enclave of office towers, apartments, parkland, and a marina. Yet like the South Street Seaport, Battery Park City has not produced a broader downtown revitalization—indeed, by creating massive new commercial and residential capacity through government subsidies, it probably hindered the prospects for private-sector investment in the area, drawing prospective tenants away from other downtown properties and driving away businesses that had to pay higher taxes to fund the subsidies. Battery Park City, moreover, could not have been built without a spacious location on landfill—which, fortuitously, was laid down at government expense in the 1970s, before the political and regulatory reaction to Westway rendered such additions to the Hudson shoreline impossible. The state-run Battery Park City Authority also benefited from being exempt from city zoning rules (later adopting them voluntarily after much of the project was complete), a luxury unavailable to private developers.

A distressing consequence of the New York waterfront's political and regulatory entanglement is that visionary thinking about the shoreline's future is now in short supply. Among public officials and private developers alike, with rare exceptions, pessimistic, narrow views of the waterfront's potential predominate, with ideas for its renewal hemmed in by considerations of what is politically possible, what is realistic under present regulatory arrangements, what can be done that will avoid a chorus of complaints from outraged environmentalists and community activists. The terms of debate have increasingly shrunk down to minor or incremental improvements that offend as few people as possible.

Such constraints mark the post-Westway history of Manhattan's Hudson River waterfront between Battery Place and 59th Street, virtually all of which is state- or city-owned, acquired in anticipation of Westway. For several years after Westway's demise, the area sat in limbo, the various agencies with jurisdiction over it shunning the controversy that would result from any new proposals. In the past several years, new plans for a riverfront park and related development have taken shape, but local political opposition has repeatedly stalled them or scaled them back. Hence, the five miles of shoreline from Tribeca to Clinton have mostly languished as a home to parking lots, gloomy homeless encampments, empty sheds, and drab municipal facilities.

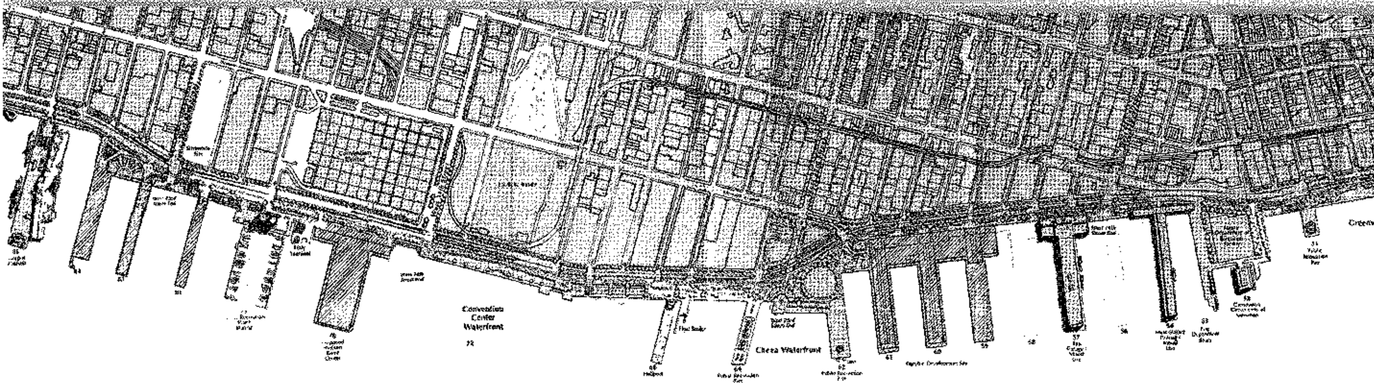
The Hudson River Park Conservancy, a public authority set up by New York State and City in 1992, has just begun to develop a park along much of this stretch of shoreline. However, the project will use no new landfill or offshore platforms—a concession to the striped bass, as well as to politics: any proposal for altering the shoreline, even on a scale far smaller than Westway, would create a Westway-like uproar. Hence, as currently envisioned, the Hudson River Park will be located on existing piers and on the narrow strip of land between the shoreline and the outer edge of what is now the West Side Highway (which will be replaced by a tree-lined, six-lane boulevard designated State Route 9A). While this would be a vast improvement over the West Side waterfront's current state, it also means that the park will at many points be 30 feet wide or less—a "glorified bike path," as Cooper Union architect Kevin Bone says.

NANCY JO JOHNSON

The bright spots on New York's waterfront include Battery Park City, in downtown Manhattan, . . .

Moreover, the conservancy seeks to allow shops, marinas, or other enterprises on several piers to generate revenues for the park's maintenance. Yet such plans face dogmatic resistance from local community boards, elected officials such as Assemblywoman Deborah Glick, a Greenwich Village Democrat, and activists such as the Clean Air Campaign's Marcy Benstock, a longtime Westway opponent now locked in litigation with the conservancy (which, Benstock charges, is ultimately planning to allow high-density development on the Hudson waterfront). Such sentiment might be called "open-space absolutism"—an uncompromising insistence that the waterfront be transformed into parks and public space unsullied by private profit or development.

Pier 40, off Greenwich Village, has been a major point of contention. Originally a passenger and freight terminal, it is a huge, unique structure, covering 16 acres, with a large inner courtyard surrounded by a three-story building. The conservancy proposes to use most of the pier for ball fields and open space, with about a fifth reserved



for small-scale enterprises such as flower markets. The local community board and neighborhood groups insist that the site consist entirely of parkland, with no commercial activity at all. A 1990 recommendation by a New York State task force that the site include low-rise housing has long since gone by the wayside, discarded as politically impossible. The matter remains unresolved, winding its way through environmental reviews and public hearings. At present, Pier 40, operated by the Port Authority, continues to serve a different function altogether: it is the largest parking lot in New York City.

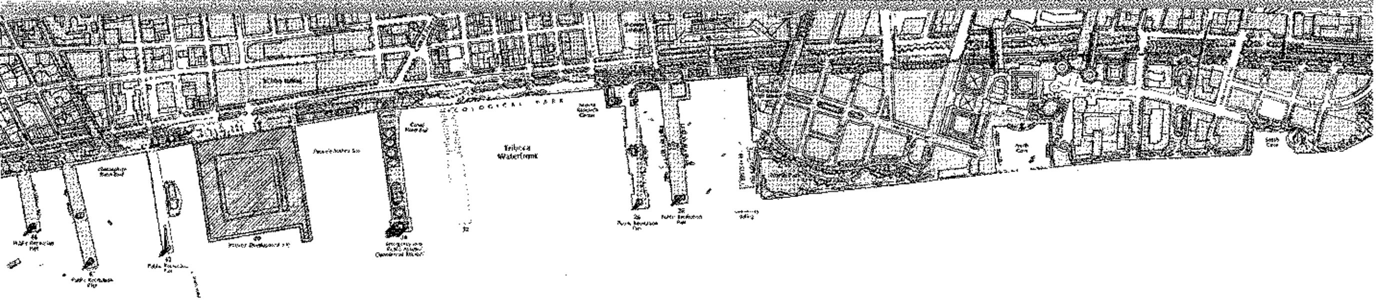
Consider what the Hudson River waterfront from Tribeca to Clinton might look like under a different political and regulatory climate. The Hudson River Park, expanded by landfill and platforms and financed by development sites, would be a recreational and cultural center as important to the city as Central Park. Pier 40, developed as a complex of townhouses, shops, and esplanades, would be one of Manhattan's most prestigious addresses, the waterfront equivalent of Central Park South. Such development, far from making the shoreline exclusive to a few, would provide revenues for the maintenance of large stretches of parkland and public space. The waterfront would be a tourist attraction, too. On its newly expanded piers, one might find an open-air theater, a new restaurant row, perhaps a stable for horseback riding along a landfill-enhanced shoreline path or a marina with sailboats for rent.

A glimpse of the West Side's potential may be found at the Chelsea Piers Sports & Entertainment Complex, perched on four piers between 17th and 23rd Streets. The $100 million complex, most of which opened in late 1995, contains television studios and diverse recreational facilities, from a marina to a golf driving range on one pier to two large ice skating rinks on another. A 1.2-mile esplanade that runs along the perimeter of the piers provides free public access to the site's entire riverfront. The complex is expected to be profitable, producing $25 million in revenue this year and $40 million in 1997, according to projections by its developer, the private Chelsea Piers Management Company. Moreover, Chelsea Piers, located on property owned by the New York State Department of Transportation, will generate over $2 million in annual rent under a 20-year lease, providing revenues for the maintenance of the Hudson River Park.

Yet Chelsea Piers stands on the Hudson as an isolated success story. Its existence owes much to an interstice in the otherwise hostile political climate toward West Side waterfront projects: unlike Greenwich Village, Chelsea does not have a tradition of all-out resistance to real estate development. Even so, the complex faced numerous hurdles. Plans to include a Herman's Sporting Goods store, for example, were dropped in the face of opposition from Councilman Tom Duane, among others, who regarded it as too commercial. And getting the state to open the property to private development proposals in the first place required "lobbying every elected official who governs the West Side," says Roland W. Betts, chairman of Chelsea Piers Management—everyone from State Senator Franz Leichter to Assemblyman Richard Gottfried to Borough President Ruth Messinger.

Moreover, existing structures at Chelsea Piers, unlike those at many other sites along the Hudson, were suitable for new uses. (Just south, by contrast, there is a field of rotting pilings in the water, untouchable for redevelopment because it is—you guessed it—a breeding ground for striped bass.) Built in 1910 as New York's premier passenger terminal (the *Lusitania* left from there on its ill-fated final voyage, and in 1912 the *Titanic* was scheduled to arrive), the four Chelsea Piers remained in good condition largely because they were extensively repaired in the 1960s—just prior to becoming obsolete as containerized freighters went to New Jersey. By the early 1990s, the site was used mainly as a municipal tow pound.

Open-space absolutism—the insistence on parkland-or-nothing that has characterized opposition to mixed-use development on the West Side and elsewhere—is not the only school of thought that



has shaped public policy regarding the waterfront. Another ideology, with different aims but similar resistance to market forces, might be called "reactionary industrialism." Its emphasis: using government funds and public-works projects to prop up traditional shipping and industrial activities.

For example, in recent years the city government and the Port Authority have poured subsidies totaling some $40 million a year into shipping facilities such as the Brooklyn Marine Terminal and the Red Hook Container Terminal, which in 1994 had net operating losses, respectively, of $12.3 million and $5.1 million. Meanwhile, most cargo has continued to flow to New Jersey's ports, with their better rail and truck links. Last year the mere hint by the City Planning Department that such subsidies be reexamined provoked a barrage of criticism from die-hard defenders of New York shipping, including the subsidized operators of the terminals, the city's Economic Development Corporation, and Congressman Jerrold Nadler.

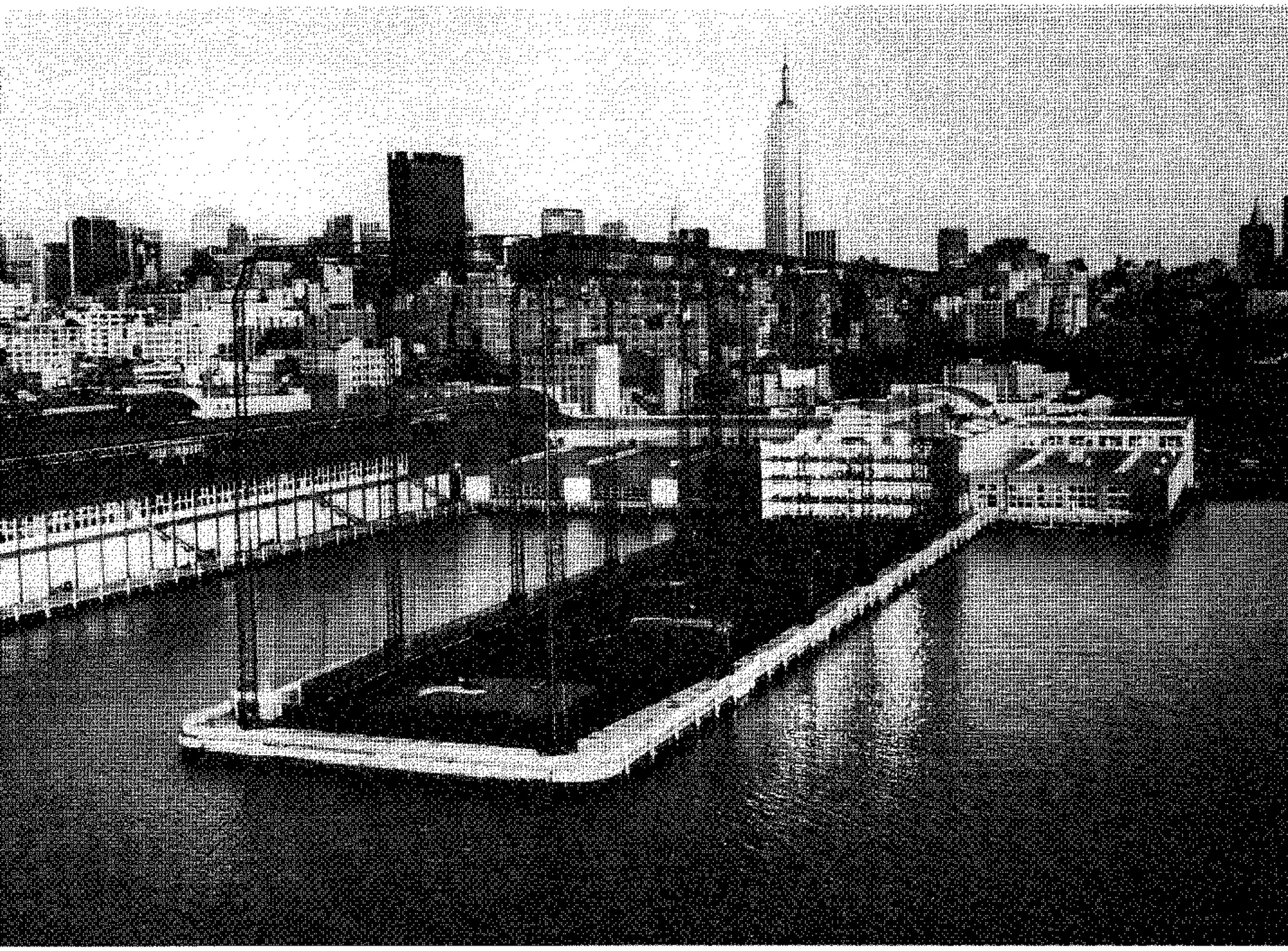
Indeed, since arriving in Congress in 1993, Nadler has been a vocal proponent of far greater public efforts to restore New York's primacy as a commercial port. His proposals—for a major new container port in northern Brooklyn and new rail-freight facilities throughout the city, including an underwater tunnel linking Brooklyn to Staten Island—are visionary and ambitious, unlike much current thinking about the waterfront. Yet they would also be vastly expensive and still have unclear prospects of luring cargo vessels back to New York. Unlikely to attract funding at a time of budget cuts in Washington and Albany, Nadler's vision has served mainly as a rationale for resisting zoning changes and new development—and thus as yet another obstacle to reviving New York's waterfront.

Meanwhile, market forces rather than government subsidies are demonstrating the waterfront's potential as a place of commerce and transportation, most prominently in the revival of the private ferry industry during the past decade. Having sunk out of sight in the 1960s after a long decline, the ferry industry came steaming back in the mid-1980s, when several small companies, sensing a market for an alternative to the city's clogged bridges and tunnels, began experimenting with service between Manhattan and New Jersey. After a flurry of new ventures, the industry saw the emergence of successful operators, such as Arthur Imperatore's New York Waterway, and a growing number of routes throughout the New York area. In every quarter since 1986, total ridership on private ferries has expanded; it now stands at around 24,000 passenger trips per weekday.

Just south of the Chelsea Piers lies a field of rotting pilings, untouchable for redevelopment because it is a breeding ground for striped bass.

The role of government in all this has been limited but crucial: providing basic infrastructure by making city docks available as landing sites—and otherwise leaving the industry alone. Making no effort to regulate fares, the city allowed the companies to set rates so as to maximize their return on investment. Moreover, the city provided no operating subsidies and no bailouts for companies unable to compete. The entrepreneurs, notes Alan Olmsted, director of private ferry operations at the New York City Department of Transportation, were given "freedom to fail, unlike in other forms of transportation, where the government steps in as soon as a particular route starts to go sour."

The ferry revival has enhanced New York's quality of life. Some commuters, such as those going from Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, to Manhattan's Upper East Side, cut their travel time by half or more, and ferry rides are an eminently pleasant way of commuting. Competition has kept fares down: most trips cost $2 to $5, though deluxe airport shuttles, with bar service and other luxuries, cost more. And because of the ferries, on a typical weekday



. . . and the Chelsea Piers complex, whose facilities include a golf driving range on a Hudson River pier.

there are several thousand fewer cars to congest Manhattan's streets. Moreover, with routes and services still expanding, options will become increasingly convenient. Isolated parts of the now-forbidding waterfront will become less remote.

The waterfront's potential for renewal shows up even in some unlikely places. In Brooklyn's Red Hook section, along the Upper New York Bay and the Gowanus Canal, the derelict remnants of a maritime and industrial past, including a long-abandoned grain terminal and an unused pier once operated by a sugar company, line much of the shoreline; several blocks inland looms the poverty-ridden Red Hook Houses project. But in the midst of this bleak scene stand the revived Pier 41 and Beard's Basin Pier, each featuring a long, brick warehouse building. Their developer, former police detective Greg O'Connell, has been rehabilitating the sites and filling them with commercial tenants. The Beard's Basin warehouse, a Civil War–era building with 330,000 square feet on 7.5 acres, was crumbling and vacant when O'Connell won a long-term lease from the Port Authority in 1992; now it has 13 tenants, from a glassblower to a manufacturer of diamond blades for the aerospace industry, occupying about half the building. Two blocks away, the 150,000-square-foot Pier 41 building, half-empty when O'Connell bought it from a private owner in 1984, is now fully occupied by businesses ranging from a pet-food wholesaler to an Italian food importer.

This may be just the beginning. O'Connell speaks about turning the Red Hook waterfront into a thriving center of business and even tourism, featuring craft shops, microbreweries, and other attractions alongside light manufacturing and wholesalers. He has plans to link his two piers with a public esplanade near the shoreline and then to work with one of his tenants, the Brooklyn Historical Railway Association, to develop a trolley that would run along the waterfront and inland. O'Connell also speaks about a revival of shipping in Red Hook, with small cargo vessels serving niche markets, shipping bulk goods to and from Haiti on behalf of Brooklyn's large Haitian community, for example. If such a revival occurs, it will be because it is economically viable, not because it has been forced into existence at taxpayer expense.

DOM FURORE/GOLF DIGEST © 1996

Visions of the waterfront such as those underlying Greg O'Connell's projects or the ferry revival or Chelsea Piers cannot be dictated from a central location. They require entrepreneurs familiar with local conditions, able to imagine something better, and willing to invest capital and take risks. A first step toward making such things a broader reality, rather than isolated outposts amid general decay, would be a streamlining of the regulatory process. California provides a model worth following: under a law enacted in 1993, waterfront projects receive a consolidated environmental permit, eliminating the overlapping jurisdictions of the state's Water Quality Board and Department of Toxic Substance Control.

Broader environmental reforms—some now being contemplated in Washington and Albany—would facilitate waterfront development in New York. In particular, the sweeping liability provisions of federal and state Superfund laws cry out for limits: they currently hold developers liable for cleanup costs even if they had little or nothing to do with a site's contamination. Scaling back aquatic environmental protections to allow greater use of piers and offshore platforms would also improve development prospects.

Just as urgently as it needs zoning changes to permit new residential and commercial uses in former industrial areas, New York also needs to get additional waterfront property freed from the ownership and control of the city and state governments and public authorities. Through long-term leases and outright sales, public properties that have been dormant or underused will become active development sites. It's also worth experimenting further with using revenues from waterfront development sites, as at Chelsea Piers, to finance nearby parkland and public space.

Above all, a revitalization of the waterfront will require changes in political and community attitudes. The open-space absolutism that results in endless lawsuits and angry public hearings is self-defeating even on its own terms; it preserves large parts of the shoreline in their current inaccessible state, while fighting projects that would expand public access. The reactionary industrialism that seeks to resurrect New York's traditional waterfront also defeats its own aims, curtailing the very market forces that could spark an industrial revival. Finally, the crabbed, pessimistic outlook that blinkers much current thinking about the waterfront in both the public and private sectors, the shriveling of ambition that years of stalled and stymied projects have bred, needs to be blown away by an energetic spirit of can-do optimism, so that New York's shoreline can fulfill its vast potential. ●

Why Economists Still Like Cities

Edward L. Glaeser

As the Information Age dawns, the dismal science has cheery news for urban America.

Are cities doomed? Economists have amassed a wealth of data that allow us to answer: emphatically no. Cities are essential to the Information Age economy, and those with a diverse mix of industries and a highly skilled workforce—preeminently New York—have a bright future. Indeed, the communications revolution gives cities a whole new vitality. In study after study, the evidence of cities' continuing vibrancy is unambiguous. Here's what the data show:

A Hoover Institution study I conducted with economist David Maré found that, on average, workers in big cities earn considerably more than workers in small cities, who in turn earn far more than their rural counterparts. According to 1990 census data, workers who live in metropolitan areas surrounding cities of more than 500,000 people earn 34.4 percent more than workers who live outside metropolitan areas, and 10.8 percent more than those who live in metropolitan areas with smaller central cities. And earnings are higher in cities than in suburbs: within metropolitan areas, on average, individuals who work within the central city earn 17.3 percent more than those who work beyond the city limits. These results stand even if we make them go through a large number of statistical hoops and further tests. For example, workers with the same level of education and those in the same demographic group get substantially higher wages in cities.

Standard labor economics tells us that high wages reflect higher productivity: a company won't pay a premium for workers unless it gets value for its money. And indeed, economists Antonio Ciccone and Robert Hall have established a direct connection between urban density and productivity. Looking across the U.S., they found that industries in denser areas are much more productive than elsewhere.

Why? A look at earning patterns over time suggests that it is because the dynamic, economically diverse urban environment allows workers to develop skills superior to those they would be able to develop outside a city. For it is *longevity* in the urban workforce that enhances an employee's value. New migrants to cities experience less than a 1 percent wage gain from their move. But after five years, those workers are earning over 10 percent more than similar workers who stayed in rural areas. These wage gains represent permanent skill accumulation: when urban workers leave cities, they experience no significant wage declines. And there's no evidence that technological or social developments are diminishing cities' role as the training ground for America's workers: I found little change over the past 15 years in the urban wage premium.

Although workers of all educational levels earn more in cities, the urban wage premium is greatest for the most educated. Little wonder, then, that cities continue to attract the brightest and best-educated young workers. The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth tells us that young urban dwellers have significantly higher IQ scores on average than young people living in rural areas. And the average resident of a big-city metropolitan area has about one more year of education than his rural counterpart.

Today, of course, the ingredients for urban success are widely different than they were during the first great age of American urbanization a century ago. During the Industrial Age, urbanization and the rise of manufacturing were so closely linked as to be almost one and the same thing. In 1870, economist Alberto Ades and I have found, the statistical correlation between a state's concentration of manufacturing and its level of urbanization was 86.6 percent—demonstrating what to statisticians is an extraordinarily powerful connection between the two variables. Heavy industry and urban prosperity went together for the simple reason that cities made mass production possible. A big city meant a ready-made market for manufactured goods, a market comparatively inexpensive to serve because no long-distance transportation costs were involved. So factories located in large cities could achieve real economies of scale: they could spread out fixed costs of production over massive quantities of products.

As the twentieth century progressed, it became far less advantageous for factories to be located in large cities. Transportation costs declined dramatically, making a factory's proximity to a large urban market much less crucial. The advantages of large-scale production diminished as technological advances made it economical to produce higher-quality, semi-customized goods in smaller batches and as consumers demanded those specialized products. As a result, manufacturers were able to locate plants in suburban and rural areas that offered less expensive real estate, a more favorable tax and regulatory climate, and a better quality of life for executives and workers.

If the U.S. economy had continued to center on heavy manufacturing, these developments may well have spelled doom for the cities. But traditional manufacturing has declined greatly relative to high-wage, high-skill industries, from telecommunications to finance to advertising. In 1950, 33.7 percent of American workers had manufacturing jobs; by 1990 this proportion had declined by almost half, to 17.4 percent.

The shift away from heavy industry has been the salvation of urban America. For while the decline in urban manufacturing has been unavoidable, the growth of high-skill industries has enabled many cities to prosper.

Unsurprisingly, cities that depend on manufacturing have tended to decline. Economists José Scheinkman, Andrei Shleifer, and I, in a study for the *Journal of Monteary Economics*, examined how cities' dependence on manufacturing in 1960 affected their growth during the subsequent three decades. We found that every 20 percent increment in a city's 1960 concentration of employment in manufacturing corresponded with a 16 percent decrease in population between 1960 and 1990. That same 20 percent increase in dependence on manufacturing in 1960 led to a 50 percent decline in manufacturing employment and a 13.4 percent decline in non-manufacturing employment between 1960 and 1990.

Declining manufacturing centers, especially smaller cities, dot the American landscape. East Chicago had 58.9 percent of its labor force in the manufacturing sector in 1960. Its population declined from 57,669 to 33,892, or 41 percent, between 1960 and 1990. During the same period Flint, Michigan, and Youngstown, Ohio, lost 28.5 percent and 44.2 percent of their populations, respectively. By contrast, cities in the Midwest and

The key to urban success once was manufacturing. Today it's knowledge industries like finance.

UPI/BETTMANN

Northeast that don't depend on smokestack industries showed substantial growth. These include Springfield, Illinois, the state capital, which grew by 20 percent; Stamford, Connecticut, which has attracted financial firms and corporate headquarters and which grew 17 percent; and Champaign, Illinois, a college town, which grew 28 percent. In the West and the South, the nonmanufacturing winners are even more striking. Phoenix, a young metropolis with a diverse economy and a population that recently surpassed 1 million, more than doubled in population between 1960 and 1990; Durham, North Carolina, with strong research, health care, and service sectors, grew by more than 50 percent in the same period.

The key to urban success or failure in today's economy is simple: high-skill cities prosper; low-skill ones stagnate or decline. The National Bureau of Economic Research study found that cities that had a high proportion of college-educated workers in 1960 grew in population over the subsequent three decades, while those that didn't, shrank. Compare the striking success of the university town of Madison, Wisconsin, where 20.9 percent of residents were college-educated in 1960, with the relative failure of nearby blue-collar Milwaukee, with only 5.9 percent college-educated in the same year. In the next three decades, Madison's population grew by half, while Milwaukee's declined 33 percent during the same period. Or compare two southern Virginia cities: Portsmouth, once a shipbuilding center (4.1 percent college-educated in 1960), shrank by 28 percent between 1960 and 1990, while Hampton, home of NASA's Langley Research Center (10.4 percent college-educated in 1960), grew by 53 percent.

Education's importance for urban success is growing rapidly. Scheinkman, Shleifer, and I found that the connection between initial levels of education and population growth was much greater from 1970 to 1990 than it had been in the previous 20 years. Between 1950 and 1970, one additional year of schooling on average in a city increased its growth rate by 3.8 percent. For the 1970 to 1990 period, that figure soared to 8.1 percent.

Even the less well schooled residents of well educated cities prosper. James Rauch and David Maré have both marshaled overwhelming evidence that higher average education levels in a city translate into higher wages for everyone—not just the well-educated themselves. That is, if two workers have identical levels of schooling, the one who lives in the better-educated city is likely to make more money—perhaps because the sharing of knowledge in a highly educated workforce makes each individual worker more productive.

It's not just the promise of financial success that makes cities magnets for talented workers. Young workers flock to cities in part because they will be exposed to a far wider range of accomplished elders and to a wider range of experiences than their rural peers. Economist Alfred Marshall's century-old observation is as true today as ever: "Great are the advantages which people following the same skilled trade get from near neighborhood to one another. The mysteries of the trade become no mystery but are, as it were, in the air."

Young medical residents in New York, for example, encounter a much broader range of medical problems than their rural counterparts. Artists and actors benefit from the city's rich cultural environment. Young lawyers, developing skills at breakneck pace over grueling hours, learn in New York not only from the partners at their own firms but also from their opponents and from lawyers they meet socially.

Large urban labor markets also encourage what economists call the coordination of labor: a big city makes it much easier for a worker or entrepreneur to find a niche. As Adam Smith noted, the bigger the market, the finer a division of labor is possible. By contrast, Smith wrote, in small villages "every

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

farmer must be butcher, baker, and brewer for his own family." Hard data confirm Smith's observations: in a study for the National Bureau of Economic Research, Alberto Ades and I found a correlation of over 87 percent between the division of labor and the degree of urbanization across states in the nineteenth century. We lack comparable data for modern periods, but a casual look at the yellow pages shows just how specialized big-city businesses can be. The Manhattan yellow pages list such esoteric specialties as necktie renovating (one entry), nautical instruments (three entries), and papaya products (one entry). Not one of these entries appears in the San Francisco yellow pages, let alone in those of the typical small town.

Economists Gary Becker and Kevin Murphy have argued that cities support the division of labor because coordination between buyers and sellers is easier in cities. Since it's easier to shop around for suppliers in cities, it is also easier to hire outsiders to perform tasks that in an unspecialized economy would have to be performed in-house.

The bigger and more diverse the labor market, the easier it is for workers to find the right career and the right job. This is crucial for productivity: economists Robert Topel and Michael Ward have found that more than one-third of wage growth for young men comes from finding the right employer. In a city, a young worker can move across firms to find the match that is best for him. If he turns out to have chosen a field that is not ideal, he can switch careers. Journalists become financiers; lawyers transmogrify into real estate investors.

Economists have pointed to other advantages of the coordination of labor. Julio Rotemberg and Garth Saloner suggest that workers in large cities are more willing to invest in improving their own skills because such investments are more likely to pay off, since they have a superior bargaining position. In a one-company town, by contrast, the company has all the bargaining power. This would explain why greater competition among companies in a city corresponds with higher wages and productivity. Economist Alfred Marshall suggested in his 1890 masterwork, *Principles of Economics*, that a major function of cities was to insure workers against firm-specific risk. Since Wall Street has so many trading firms, workers know that even if their firm gets into trouble they will normally be able to look for work down the street. Sherwin Rosen emphasized that cities would be especially good for the most able workers, who have a wider market for their talents.

The same features that give cities an economic edge on rural areas also give the most successful cities an edge on others. Competition, for example, is a key to economic growth. My own research has shown that the higher the degree of competition within industries—measured as the number of firms in an industry relative to the total number of workers in that industry—the more the industry tends to grow. This explains why successful local industries, like electronics in Silicon Valley or finance in Manhattan, often have a myriad of small, competitive firms.

A diverse mix of industries is also a major ingredient of urban success. A study that José Scheinkman, Andrei Shleifer and Hédi Kallal, and I published in the *Journal of Political Economy* found that as the concentration of employment in a given city's largest five industries fell by 10 percent—that is, as the city's economy became more diverse—that city's rate of growth in employment rose by 9 percent between 1960 and 1990.

Individual industries, too, grew faster in diversified cities than elsewhere. In a sample of city industries from 1956 to 1987, two of the fastest-growing were business services in Albuquerque and durable wholesale trade in San Jose—cities where the five biggest industries employed, respectively, just 21.7 percent and 29 percent of all workers. In contrast, the slowest-growing city industry was textiles in Gadsden, Alabama, where the five largest industries employed 40.6 percent of workers.

It's not just that more diverse cities are safer from downturns in a particular industry. Standard financial theory tells us that if you invest in many things, your portfolio will be less volatile—safer from sudden declines—than if you invest in only one thing. But if such a portfolio theory of cities were correct, diversified cities would grow relatively predictably, while those with fewer industries would be subject to boom-and-bust swings. In fact, we found that the reverse is true: more diversified cities have *higher* levels of variance.

Why? Whereas the portfolio effect depends on one investment not affecting another—if my Mobil stock goes down, that doesn't mean my Disney stock will—industries within a city feed off one another in myriad complex ways. A booming retail sector gives business to the advertising industry; tourism boosts retailing; growth in the financial industry creates opportunities for industries that provide financial institutions with services, from telecommunications companies to law firms. Thus, lean times in one industry may bode ill for others, even in economically diversified cities—but in the long run, diverse cities will thrive.

Economic evidence also explodes the myth that big is necessarily bad. It's a common misconception that there are limits to growth, that cities can grow only so much before beginning an inexorable decline. As the great, but often wildly wrong, critic Lewis Mumford put it: "The forces that have formed our cities in the past are now almost automatically, by their insensate dynamism, wrecking them and threatening to destroy whole countries and continents."

Quite the contrary: there is no statistically significant connection between a city's size and its subsequent growth. Cities that grew between 1950 and 1960, for example, also grew between 1960 and 1990, regardless of how large they were to begin with. Of the six cities with more than 1 million inhabitants in 1980, three—Chicago, Detroit, and Philadelphia—lost population in the ensuing decade, while the other three—New York, Los Angeles, and Houston—gained population.

Big cities—especially those with a highly educated populace—have enormous advantages as centers of knowledge, information, and skills. Spatial proximity may no longer be important for the delivery of widgets, but it is vital for the transfer of ideas: this is the principle on which universities, think tanks, and industrial parks are built. It's also the reason why firms in highly skilled industries tend to congregate near one another: high-tech concerns in California's Silicon Valley, financial firms in Manhattan, cable TV companies in Denver. In Silicon Valley, AnnaLee Saxenian writes in *Regional Advantage*, "entrepreneurs came to see social relationships and even gossip as a crucial aspect of their businesses. In an industry characterized by rapid technological change and intense competition, such informal conversation was often of more value than more conventional but less timely forums such as industry journals."

Economists Adam Jaffe, Michael Trajtenberg, and Rebecca Henderson have illustrated this point on a broader scale by looking at patent records. Big cities, they found, are centers for innovation: in a sample of patents issued in 1975, 29.4 percent of all domestic university patents and 30.7 percent of all top corporate patents came from inventors living in the New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Boston areas, which together had only 18 percent of the U.S. population. They also found that new patents are much likelier to cite previous patents of geographically proximate inventors—even if those inventors worked for different firms. So a cross-fertilization effect seems to be at work.

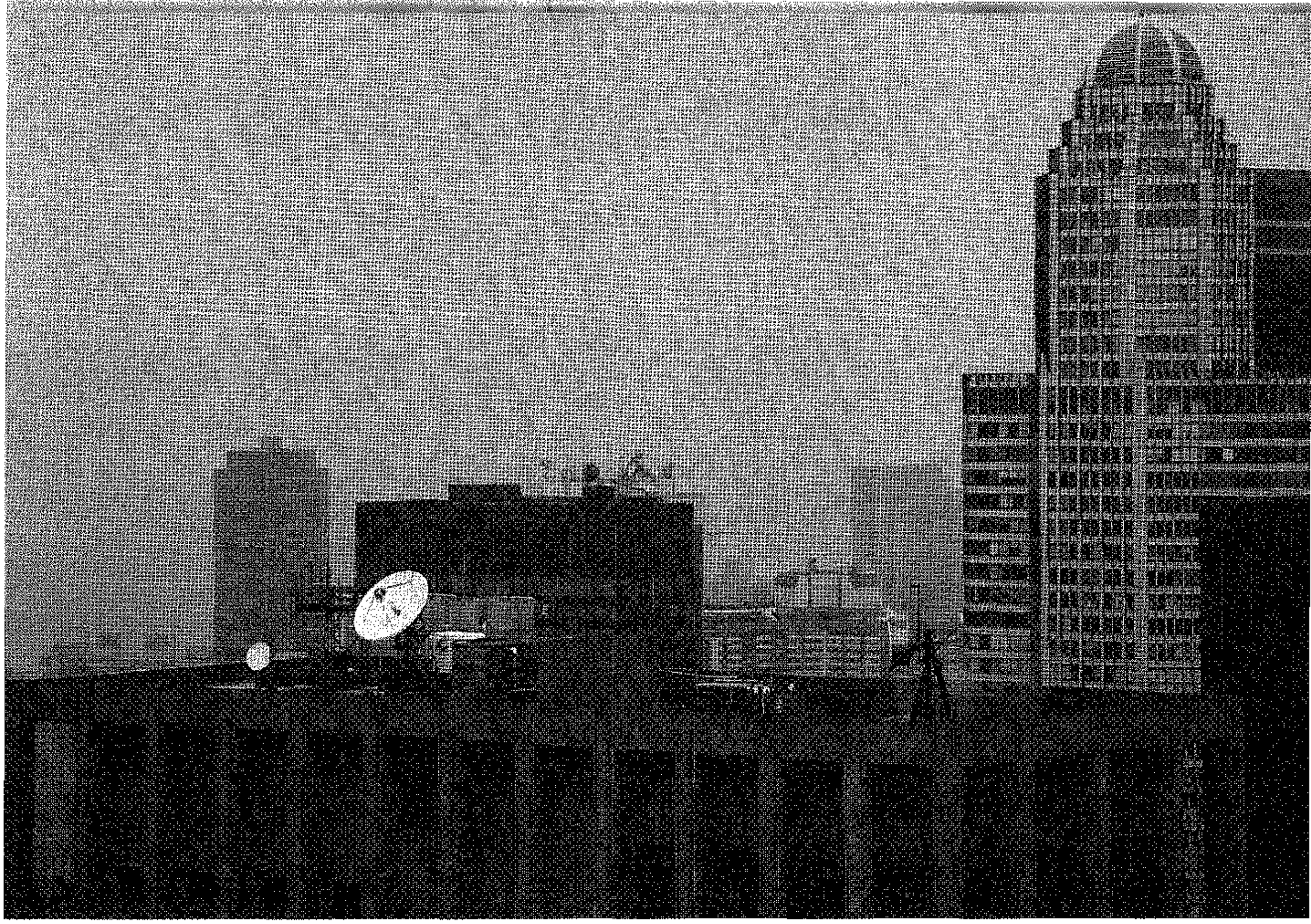
That's not surprising. Cities spur innovation not only by concentrating expertise within particular industries but also by bringing together different industries. As Jane Jacobs argued in her magnificent *The Economy of Cities*, the most important ideas come from unplanned combinations of existing ideas, and cities where such spontaneous innovations flourish will themselves thrive. This role of unplanned creations explains why economic diversity is so important for urban growth. Cities that do fewer things have less opportunity for unplanned combinations of ideas.

What, then, of the popular notion that fax machines, e-mail, and other high-tech means of communication have made geographic proximity obsolete? The conventional thinking is that electronics are a substitute for cities: why put up with traffic, noise, and other urban blights when you can live on a ranch in Montana and conduct business by e-mail?

It's too early, of course, for economists to refute this notion conclusively—though the evidence we have argues against it. Despite the proliferation of information technology in the 1980s, the share of the U.S. population living in the four largest metropolitan areas rose slightly during that decade, from 19.47 percent to 19.64 percent. The total population of the central cities in those metropolitan areas rose 4.7 percent over the same period. The share of the U.S. population living in metropolitan areas with more than 3 million inhabitants has stayed constant over the past 20 years, and the share living in all metropolitan areas has risen steadily. As we've seen, the productivity of urban workers is still much higher than that of rural workers. And where are all those wired workers conducting business at home? As the newsletter *Edge City News* reports, the nation's ten biggest concentrations of home-based workers are all in major metropolitan regions, including three each in the New York and Los Angeles areas.

The notion that telecommunications can replace face-to-face meetings defies common sense. Phones have been ubiquitous for decades, but that hasn't stopped businessmen from consummating deals and brainstorming ideas around the conference table. While electronic communication can help us communicate simple ideas, and can put masses of raw information at our fingertips, its ability to transfer more complicated ideas—and, crucially, skills—is sharply constrained. I can tell my wife that I will be late for dinner over the phone, but it would be almost impossible for me to teach her how to use a new software package on the phone. Nor would the fax machine and e-mail make it much easier: we actually need to sit down and use the software together. Likewise,

MICHAEL KAUFMAN/IMPACT VISUALS



THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

A skyline of satellite dishes rather than smokestacks betokens a flourishing city.

experienced doctors teach young interns face-to-face while treating patients; lawyers forge their skills through actual courtroom experience; 26-year-old Wall Street traders learn by watching their 36-year-old elders on the trading floor. This is true of any high-skill industry.

Moreover, unplanned combinations of ideas are critical for innovation and economic growth. Telephone calls, faxes, and e-mail messages are, by their nature, planned, reaching only the people they're intended to reach. Cities are unparalleled in their ability to provide the constant, spontaneous interchange of knowledge and insight in which new ideas thrive.

Increasingly, knowledge is economic power: according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, male college graduates' earnings advantage over male high school graduates doubled from 37 percent in 1979 to 74 percent in 1992; for women the increase in the wage premium was similar, though slightly less pronounced. The differences between the highest- and lowest-paid workers in general continue to grow—and standard economic theory tells us that means that skills command more and more of a premium in the market. As the overall mass of knowledge rises, the variety of specialized skills grows. Since cities play such a crucial role in developing skills, an increase in the demand for skills is good news for cities.

The basic forces shaping the Information Age economy bode very well for cities—and best of all for dense, economically diverse cities like New York. But it's vital that urban leaders recognize where the future of cities lies: not in seeking handouts from Washington or trying to resuscitate unskilled industry, but in creating a hospitable climate for high-skill industries and smart, well-educated workers. That means minimizing the tax and regulatory burdens that workers and entrepreneurs must bear, building and maintaining the basic infrastructure that undergirds a vibrant economy, and providing excellent municipal services—from schools to police to sanitation—that make urban life attractive for today's skilled workers. The cities that succeed in doing these things will be the economic centers of the twenty-first century. ●

Cathedrals of Commerce

Rita Kramer

Among my childhood memories of Chicago, there's nothing to match a Saturday expedition to Marshall Field's. My mother and I rattled by streetcar to the State Street corner under the elaborate clock, where we'd enter the vast rotunda beneath the Tiffany dome. Then up the escalator past the tiers of galleries to the fourth floor, where my mother would leave me in the Playroom, supervised by uniformed ladies of uncommon distinction, while she went off to make a purchase or indulge herself in "just looking." I played among playthings that, in memory, make Disneyland seem a poor place. When she came back we'd treat ourselves to lunch in the elegantly paneled Walnut Room. I had been to the Art Institute and the great domed synagogue on Lake Shore Drive, but to me Field's outshone them both. It was a museum of merchandise—or, rather, what the nineteenth-century novelist Emile Zola called "a cathedral of commerce."

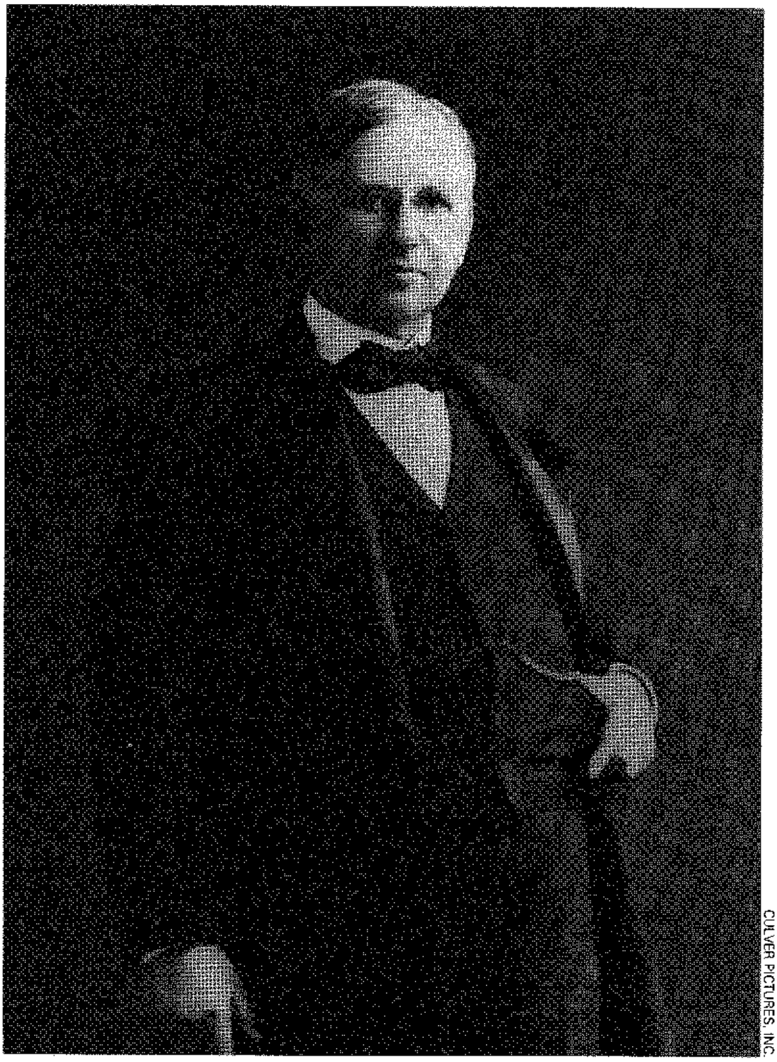
What I didn't realize was how central it was to the creation of a common civic culture. Along with the public school and the political party clubhouse, the baseball park, the daily tabloid, and the apartment building, the department store was one of the key institutions that turned a heterogeneous population into a coherent urban culture, in urbanologist Gunther Barth's view. More than just an economic phenomenon, the department store, at the intersection of culture and commerce, was a social force that helped mold the modern city dweller's sense of identity by providing a shared experience, a vision common to all kinds of participants.

The emergence of the department store was an international urban development. Bon Marché, founded in Paris in 1870, became the background for Zola's 1883 novel *Au bonheur des dames.* There was Selfridge's in London, the first commercial building in England constructed of reinforced concrete on a steel frame. Even Tokyo had its Mitsukoshi.

But it was in the cities of the United States that the department store reached its full flowering. The redoubtable English author Frances Trollope first sowed the seed. Before her writings made her an international celebrity, the author of *Domestic Manners of the Americans* and the mother of novelist Anthony Trollope came to America in the 1820s with the hope of mending her family's tattered fortunes. She constructed her spectacular Bazaar in the frontier town of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1828, with the intention of selling imported luxury goods. Its polyglot architecture mixed Grecian pillars with Gothic windows and a Turkish dome above a rotunda,

BROWN BROTHERS

Department stores' enormous show windows created a new form of street theater.



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John Wanamaker revolutionized American retailing.

all intended to gild the crass business of trade with an overlay of cultural grandeur. This flamboyant structure served as the prototype for department stores from Chicago to Paris, with their impressive galleried rotundas and domes of colored glass.

But architecture was far from Mrs. Trollope's only visionary contribution to the department stores to come. A merchandising prophet ahead of her time, the indefatigable Fanny anticipated that shopping would become the increasingly liberated urban woman's diversion, and that women's pleasure in shopping could be enhanced by combining it with pleasures of other kinds. "Every useful and useless article, in dress, in stationery, in light and ornamental household furniture, chinas, and more pellucid porcelains," read her prospectus for the Bazaar, "will be displayed and vended" in a setting agreeably enhanced by musicales and dramatic presentations. She envisioned a marriage of commerce and recreation, a place where the benighted inhabitants of Cincinnati could learn to "enjoy elegant leisure and intelligent amusement." The structure was to include a coffeehouse, an ice cream parlor, a tearoom, an art gallery, an immense ballroom, and a columned orchestral gallery overlooking the shopping floor.

Failure came swiftly, the result of cost overruns, insufficient credit, the personal unpopularity that Mrs. Trollope's patronizing attitude toward the Cincinnati citizenry had created, and stock that, when it finally arrived from England, Mrs. Trollope was dismayed to find consisted of cheap "trumpery goods." But although a commercial disaster ("I believe, sir," Mrs. Trollope's son Anthony was told by a Cincinnati citizen when he visited the site of his mother's "folly" many years later, "no man or woman ever yet made a dollar in that building"), Mrs. Trollope's Bazaar was the conceptual forerunner of the grand department stores of the future.

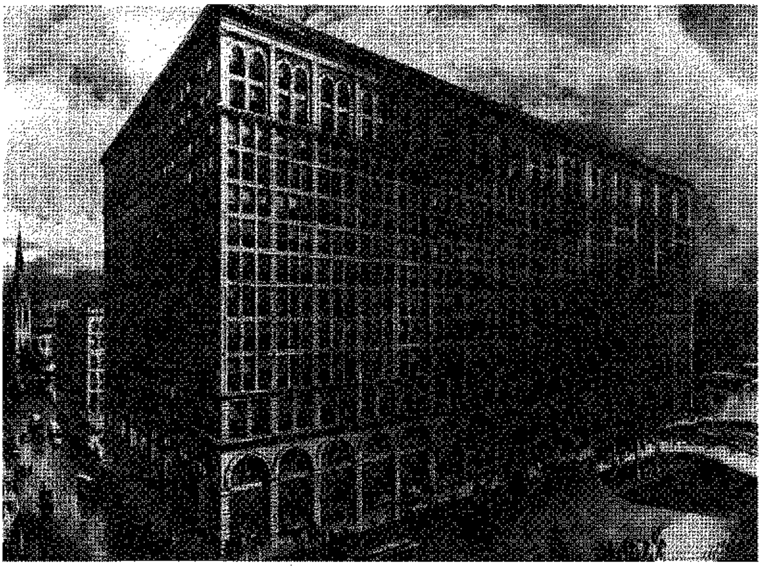
Two decades later the Marble Palace, a fancy dry goods emporium built by merchandising pioneer A. T. Stewart in 1846 at Chambers Street and Broadway in New York City, made Mrs. Trollope's dream a reality for the first time. It quickly became the most famous retail structure of mid-nineteenth-century New York. Merchants came from as far away as England to study the marvel, and Henry

James had fond boyhood memories of shopping expeditions to the "downtowny" Marble Palace with his aunt in the 1850s. The dome over its main hall, an echo of Mrs. Trollope's extravaganza, rivaled the gorgeous rotunda of City Hall across the park. On the upper floors, women and children bent over rows of sewing machines, turning out the fancy dry goods—laces, shawls, gowns—displayed on the selling floors below, along with ribbons, threads, and blankets that Stewart manufactured in mills he owned in the U.S. or imported from all over Europe.

A Scotch-Irish immigrant, Alexander Turney Stewart began the career that eventually made him the most famous merchant in America in a 22-by-30-foot shop on lower Broadway. He lived in rooms over the store. Educated for the ministry at Dublin's Trinity College, Stewart had taught school for two years after arriving in New York. When a friend to whom he'd loaned money to open a dry goods business went broke, Stewart accepted the minuscule store in settlement of the loan. He sailed back to Belfast to spend his savings on Irish linens and laces.

Returning to America, he placed a small ad in the New York *Advertiser* of September 2, 1823, informing "his friends and the public that he has taken the above store, where he offers for sale, wholesale and retail, a general assortment of fresh and seasonable DRY GOODS; a choice assortment of Irish linens, lawns, French Cambrics, Damasks, etc." that would be "sold on reasonable terms to those who will please to favour him with their commands." Many did so please. His emphasis on personal service and quality merchandise attracted the patronage of wealthy and fashionable families, who followed him to a series of ever grander stores he built on shrewdly acquired real estate. The Marble Palace was the next to last of these. Built on what was called the "shilling side" of Broadway, it soon attracted the carriage trade that had previously spent its dollars across the street.

In 1862 Stewart, always an astute spotter of urban trends, had left the Marble Palace behind in anticipation of the city's spread northward. His new store, the largest building in the city and the largest store in the world when constructed, was a five-story cast-iron structure occupying a full block near Astor Place, between Broadway and Fourth Avenue and 9th and 10th Streets. The new building was a departure from the heavy outer walls and interior duskiness of the old one, replacing a classical palace with the look of a neo-Venetian palazzo. Stewart's New Store, as it came to be called, was squarely in the new urban American architectural idiom. Its facade of white-painted cast iron was the very symbol of the Industrial Age's new technology.


CORBIS-BETTMANN

Wanamaker's New York store was once the nation's largest.

What a contemporary architect described as a "chaste and airy edifice of iron," and Stewart himself likened to "puffs of white clouds," was as sudden

The fur salon at Chicago's Marshall Field & Co. offered a variety of rugs as well as coats.

and stark a contrast to the bulky buildings of marble and brick around it as the Lever House would be to its own older neighbors a century later. Its wall of windows, made possible by the cast-iron structure, gave it an airy look outside and, along with its immense glass dome, brought daylight to the interior, where wide, unbroken aisles encouraged browsing. At night the illuminated windows and Corinthian columns were an awesome sight. No exterior sign marred the magnificence. People, Stewart said, would know what the building was.

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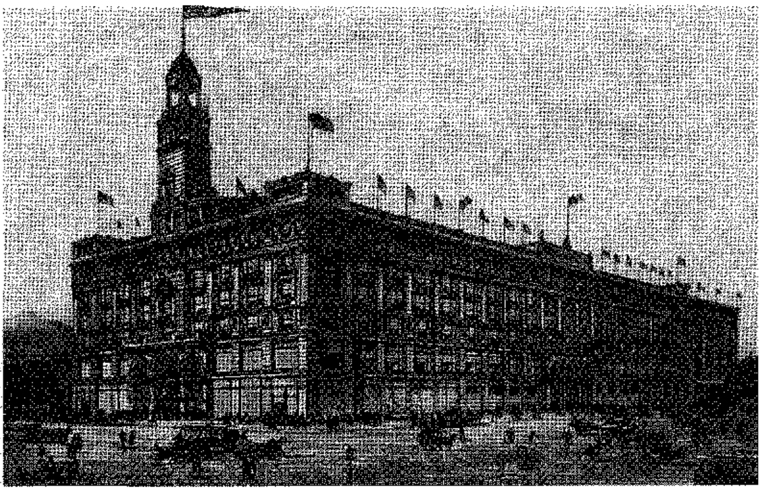
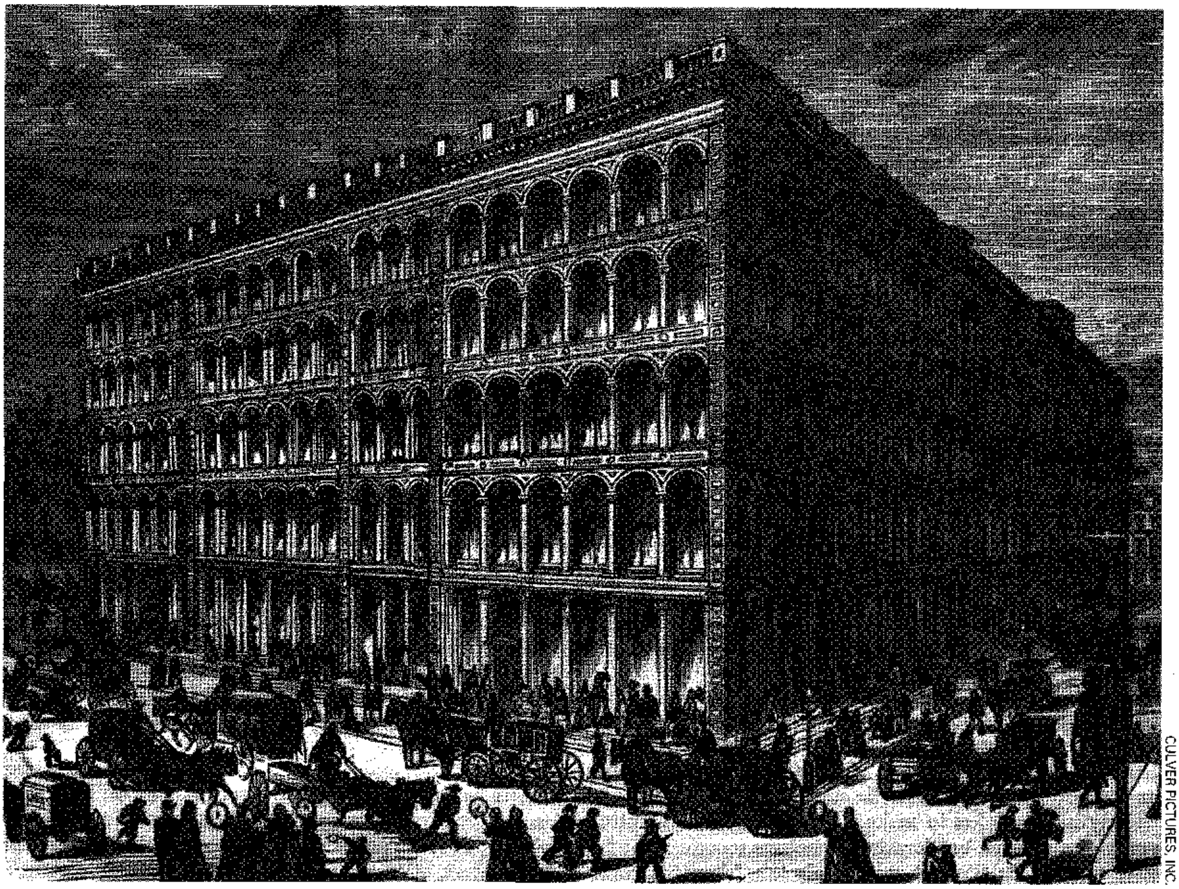


The *New York Times* dubbed Siegel-Cooper "a shopping resort."

On eight floors of over two acres each, Stewart's 2,000 employees handled everything from swaddling clothes to funeral apparel while organ music played continuously in the background. The first fully departmentalized store, "The Greatest Store in the World" sold Oriental carpets, elaborately painted spinning tops, china-headed dolls in ruffled dresses and velvet coats, sporting goods like polo mallets, men's English cravats, Chesterfield coats that sold for $12, and boys' sailor suits at $3.50. Streams of ladies whose horse-drawn carriages lined the street outside the store came to admire and buy Belfast laces, silk gowns in the Paris mode (silks were the store's biggest moneymakers), $1,000 camel-hair shawls, satin wedding slippers and trousseau corsets, fur-trimmed brocaded carriage boots, French kid gloves, ostrich-feathered bonnets, boas, and sundries like the scarves and veils fashioned by seamstresses in the store's upstairs workrooms. But there were also simple shirtwaists and practical hosiery and even items as small as a card of buttons or a pair of shoestrings that brought a less affluent crowd on foot.

Mary Todd Lincoln was one of those unable to resist the temptations of Stewart's. Mrs. Lincoln refurbished the White House with purchases from the great store, and her personal clothing bills amounted to some $27,000 at the time of her husband's death. Stewart, an early supporter of Lincoln, showed characteristic retail merchandising genius when he presented Mrs. Lincoln with a gift that made newspaper headlines: A LOVE OF A SHAWL. "At the last levee at the White House, Mrs. Lincoln wore a lace shawl, presented her by A. T. Stewart of New York, which cost $2,500."

By the late 1860s, Stewart's national reputation was such that newspapers referred to him as "Stewart the Great" and "King Stewart," and Chicago's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A. T. Stewart's New Store was the apotheosis of Industrial Age architecture and technology.

Marshall Field, who had made a study of his methods, was content to be referred to as "the A. T. Stewart of the West." President Ulysses S. Grant appointed Stewart secretary of the Treasury in 1869, but public charges that installing a businessman in the post would create a conflict of interest prevented him from taking office. In the years since he had roomed over his first tiny shop downtown, Stewart had upgraded his living quarters to a sumptuous mansion on Fifth Avenue, described by a contemporary as "perhaps the finest private house in America, filled with the finest works of art," the very best of which, including such gallery favorites as Rosa Bonheur's *The Horse Fair,* now hang in the Metropolitan Museum.

The economic and technological trends that were to make department stores flourish across the nation were already building by the time Stewart opened his "New" cast-iron store. In the years of rapid economic growth and industrial expansion after the Civil War, changes in production, distribution, and financing revolutionized retail trade. New manufacturing techniques in factories manned by immigrant labor turned out a flow of cheaper goods for mass markets. With plentiful capital available, investment bankers like Henry Morgenthau Sr. provided funds for acquiring real estate and expanding buildings and inventories. The spread of the railroads and steamship lines meant that faster means of transport could link the textile mills to the points of sale and bring items from Europe and as far away as the Orient to be gathered in unprecedented volume and variety under one roof. Everywhere, the small shop of the individual tradesman or craftsman—the bespoke tailor and bootmaker—was giving way to mass production and sales consolidation.

The great palaces of merchandise that would become known as department stores began to replace the open-air markets and dry goods stores of the prewar era. Piles of cloth gave way to carefully arranged displays of hosiery and gloves, in addition to fabrics, and eventually to ready-to-wear garments and manufactured items like furniture, rugs, dishes, and toys. Great fortunes would be built from small profits on large inventories.

The wartime mass production of uniforms for Union soldiers sparked the ready-made men's clothing industry. After Appomattox, the prospering New England cotton mills and New Jersey silk factories, with new machinery that could be tended by unskilled laborers, turned out ready-to-wear garments for every member of the family. Until then, most women had made their own clothes at home; the well-to-do had seamstresses. The ordinary housewife might have a couple of everyday dresses and a best Sunday dress. With the advent of ready-made clothes at affordable prices, not only was she liberated from tedious hours laboring over lengths of material, but also a world of fashion possibilities opened up. Styles would change with the seasons, speeded by the new fashion industry, and a middle-class woman might have a dozen dresses in her constantly changing wardrobe.

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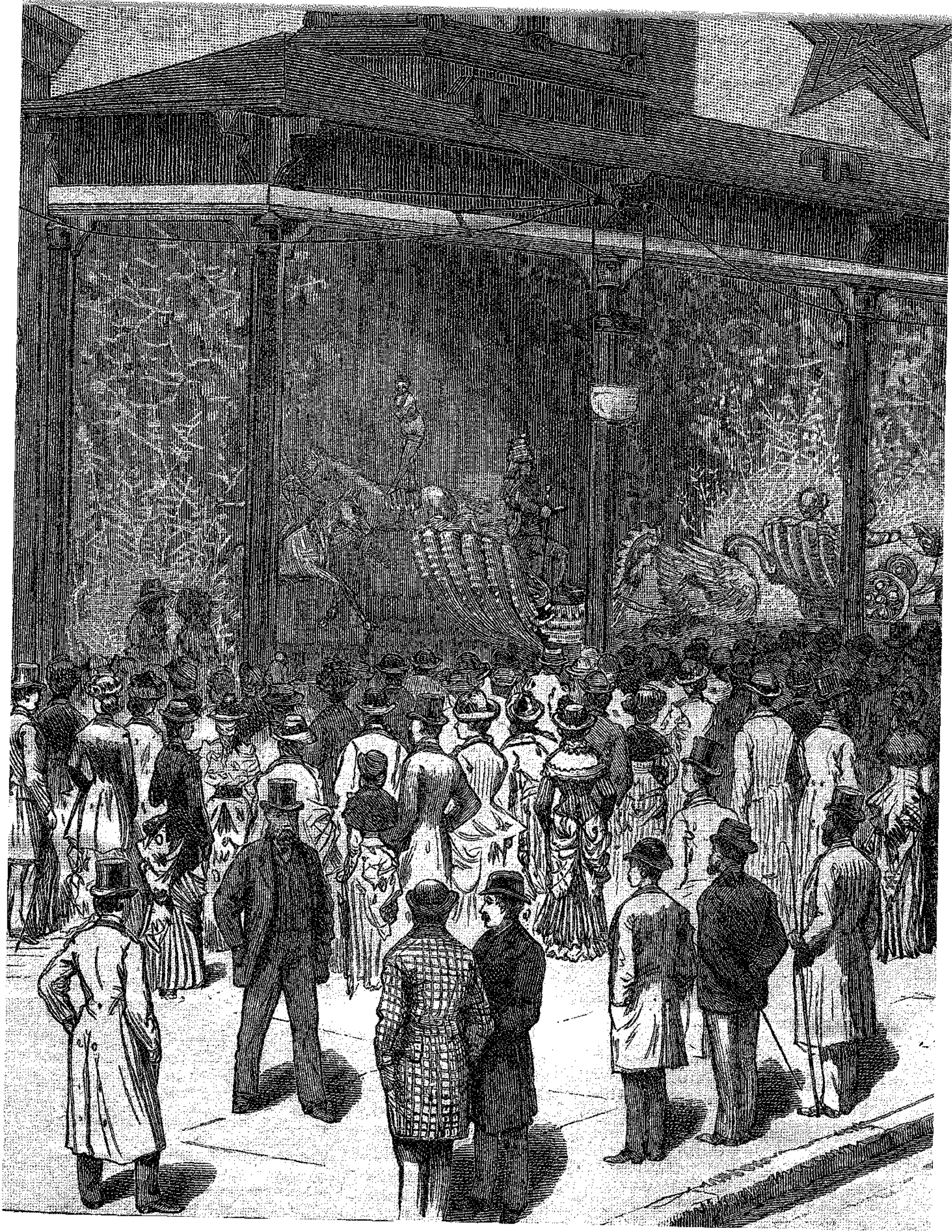
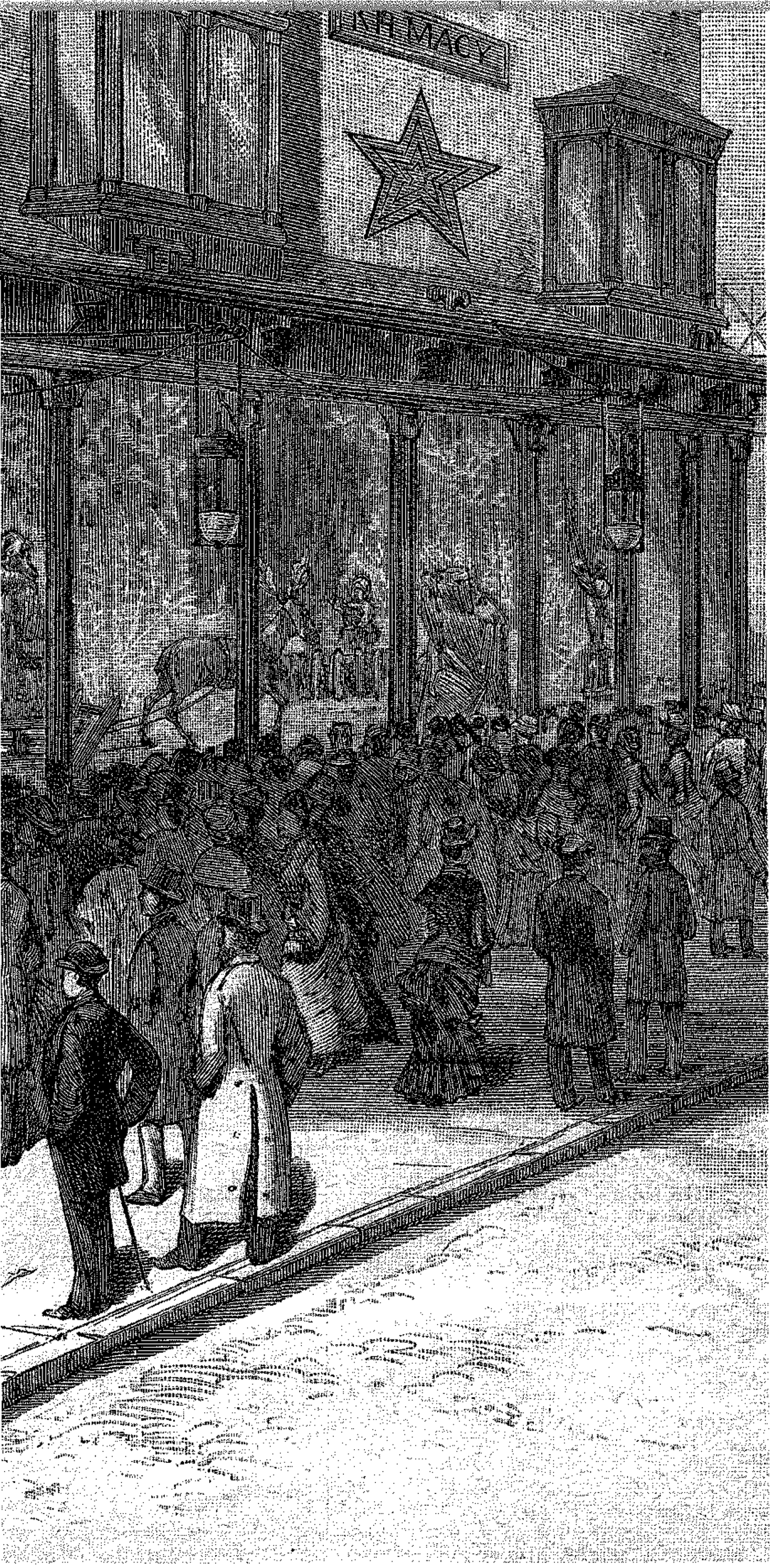
Newspapers called A.T. Stewart "Stewart the Great."

The flood of technological innovations of the post–Civil War years allowed merchant princes to construct palaces of commerce that rivaled the mansions of the nation's new millionaires and that created a new kind of merchandising drama. In 1878 John Wanamaker opened a huge dry goods emporium in a converted Philadelphia railroad freight depot. One of the first to appreciate the possibilities of Thomas Edison's new invention, Wanamaker had his Grand Depot entirely lit by electricity.

By the late nineteenth century, U.S. factories began to manufacture plate glass that was much stronger, clearer, larger, and cheaper than ever before, and the resulting enormous show windows changed the face of the city. In place of small-paned windows that gave glimpses of only a few goods and were shuttered at night, windows the size of whole rooms now displayed mannequins draped in the latest gowns, along with lavish exhibits of the furnishings and accessories on sale inside. By 1910 the windows were being lit "as if by daylight," according to one amazed contemporary. The spectacle was stunning, and people came to look even if they couldn't afford to buy. Window-shopping became a new form of urban entertainment. When Macy's drew up the curtain on a window presenting an elaborate ballroom scene with mannequins in the new ready-to-wear gowns that had begun to replace haute couture, it was street theater of a new kind, and anyone could attend.

Electric signs added color and excitement to the cityscape. To get out the word about their attractions, the stores became pio-





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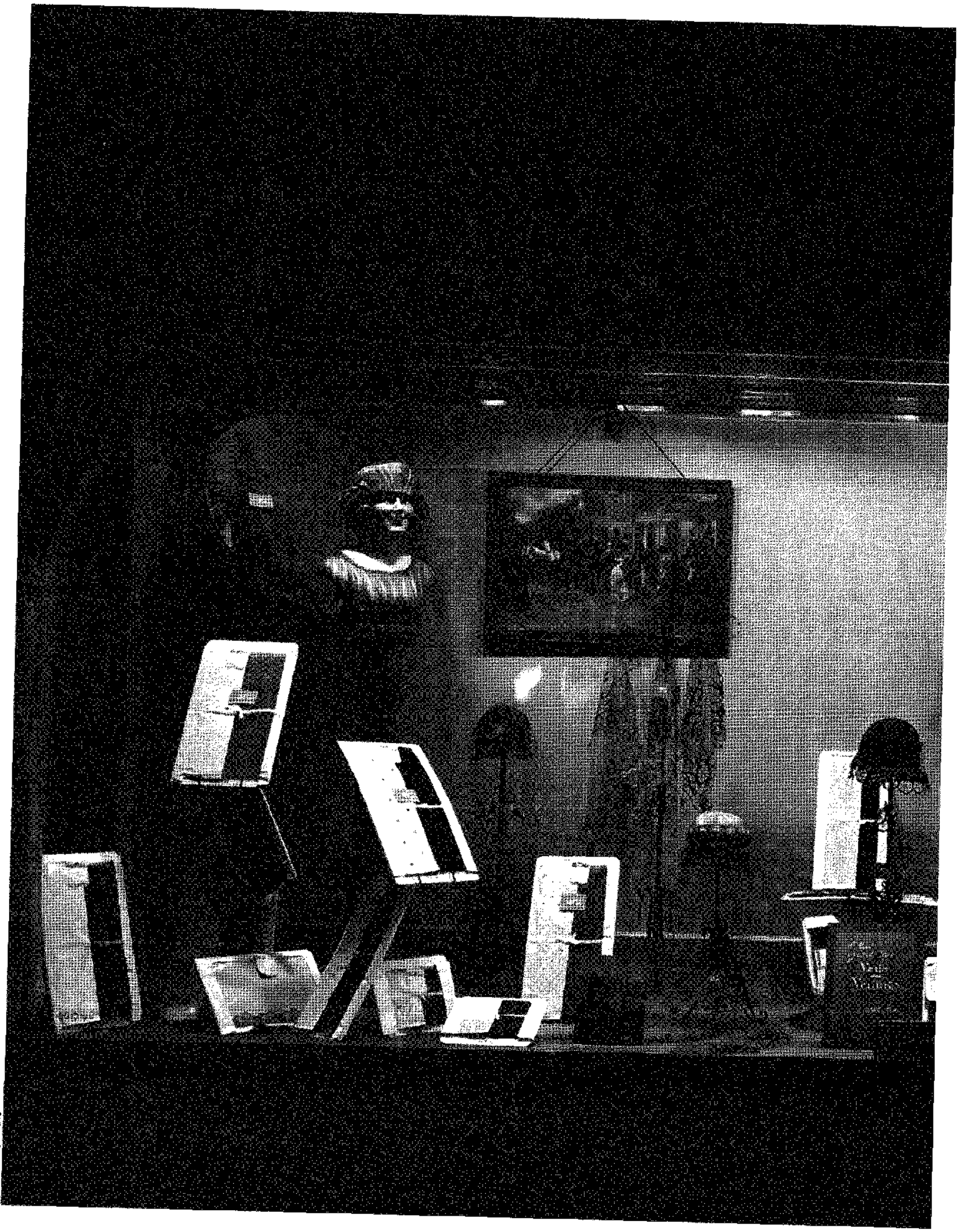
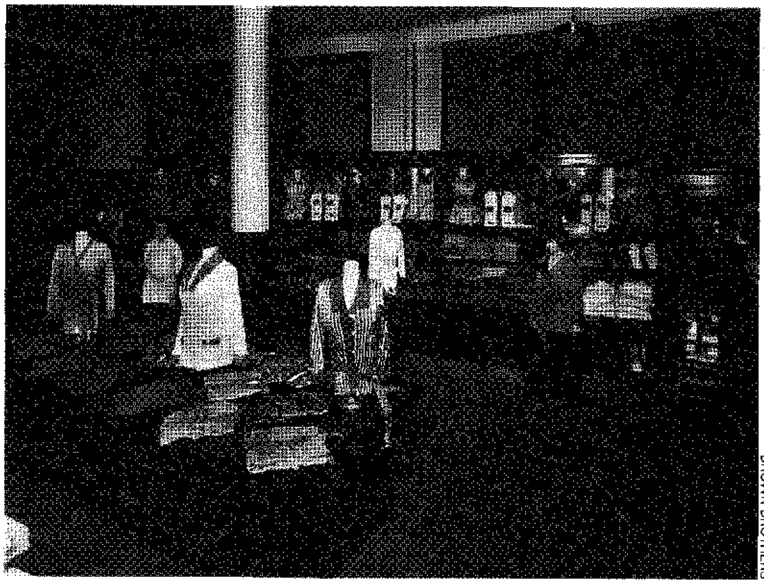
neers in new techniques of advertising. The growth of the department stores paralleled that of big-city daily newspapers, in which columns of small type began giving way to illustrations made possible by new printing technology. By the turn of the century, a symbiotic relationship had developed between the dailies, which had come to depend on the department stores as major sources of advertising revenue, and the stores, which depended on their full-page displays in the papers to entice the public. News stories about the stores' art exhibits and special holiday events regularly appeared in daily papers happy to fill their columns with accounts of the doings of their advertisers.

Technology was influencing the way the big stores did business, too. In the 1880s, with child labor still common, it wasn't remarkable to see, in answer to the salesclerk's cry of "Cash!" a ten-year-old rushing to take the purchaser's money to the cashier and return with the change. These "human shuttles," as an observer described them, were superseded by a mechanical invention known as the Lamson Cash Carrier, a basket sent on an overhead wire from the salesclerk to the cashier's perch and back. When Macy's opened its Herald Square store in 1902, it boasted a still newer innovation, the pneumatic tube system, which could shoot

R. H. Macy's "Grand Mercantile Establishment" at 14th Street and Sixth Avenue

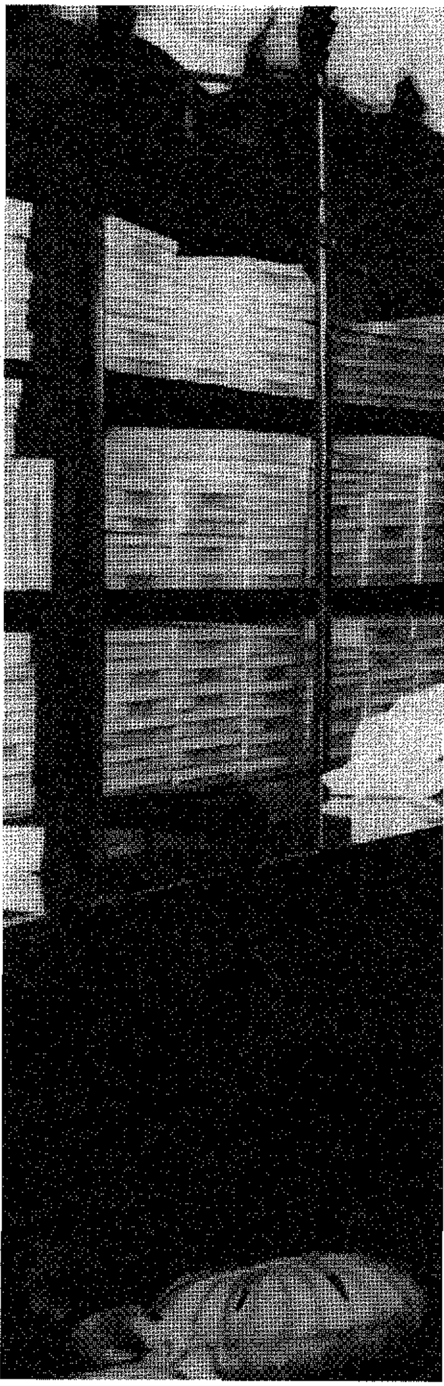


BROWN BROTHERS



BROWN BROTHERS

Gimbel's window (pages 88–89); fashionable blouses (above)



UPI/BETTMANN

money and receipts in small brass cylinders at high speeds.

Cash gave way to easy credit, in the form of charge accounts and installment plans, which made it easier for shoppers "to buy things they didn't need with money they didn't have," as one wag put it. Stores delivered purchases free of charge throughout the metropolitan area, and they accepted returns (often of goods that had obviously been worn or used). B. Altman's maroon-colored delivery wagons, drawn by matched pairs of high-stepping horses, were a familiar sight in the New York of the 1880s. Abraham & Straus in Brooklyn provided translators for its immigrant customers; special shopping services advised the gentleman at Macy's in selecting the right gift for his lady; and the lady herself could call on the services of an interior decorating staff at Altman's.

By the turn of the century, most department stores featured elevators furnished with upholstered seating, bringing together women who might otherwise never have found themselves occupying the same space. Soon, "moving stairways" were carrying customers up and down, bringing "circulation to upper stories, like blood to the veins," according to one Field's executive.

As technology changed, the social geography of New York changed, too. In Stewart's day the main retail shopping district in New York ran from Union Square along 14th Street to Sixth Avenue, up to 23rd Street and back down Broadway, the stretch known as Ladies' Mile. The cobblestoned streets with their ornate white iron facades punctuated by striped awnings were a favorite

Every potential customer, even a shopgirl on her day off, was to be treated as a lady.

place for promenaders as well as shoppers. Looking back, Lewis Mumford observed that "gauged by its architecture the department store was one of the most vital institutions of the era 1880–1914."

The great stores gradually abandoned Ladies' Mile as they followed the expanding middle class uptown, and Stewart's store languished after his death in 1876. With the help of financier Henry Morgenthau

Sr., John Wanamaker, whose eponymous Philadelphia store was already an institution, bought the A. T. Stewart store in 1896 and set about turning it into the country's largest department store, despite its by-then somewhat marginal location. In 1906 Wanamaker built a new 16-floor store across 9th Street and joined the two buildings with an overhead "Bridge of Progress." Later he added still another large building to the complex, making it one of the two largest department stores in the world, the other being his Philadelphia store.

Wanamaker, whose home base remained Philadelphia, inherited A. T. Stewart's mantle as the nation's leading merchant. As homage to the retailing pioneer he so admired, the first thing he did on acquiring the cast-iron palace was to erect signs reading "Formerly A. T. Stewart & Company." But he knew he'd extended Stewart's legacy: he had, as he put it, "revolutionized the retail business in the United States" by building an urban commercial empire on the marketing of fashion.

A devout Presbyterian who reread the Bible throughout his life, Wanamaker devised a retailing style that often connected worship with profit, the very embodiment of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. The angels decorating the rotunda of the Philadelphia store at Christmas 1895 typified his harnessing of religious iconography to merchandising. During the Christmas season in 1898, he constructed a church, complete with organ and robed choir, beneath the rotunda of his New York store. It proved so inspiring that beginning in 1910 he had the Grand Court of the Philadelphia store transformed into a virtual cathedral, where numerous shoppers attested to having experienced the true Christmas spirit. The tradition lasted until well into the 1950s. Wanamaker was equally creative a merchandiser on the secular side of life. In 1908 the New York Wanamaker's displayed the "House Palatial," a two-story, 24-room model house exhibiting home furnishings in a context that anticipated the "life-style" theme merchandising of Ralph Lauren nearly a century later.

Wanamaker's created a world of its own for both employees and customers. The Wanamaker's day began with employees singing such "morning songs" as "Look for the Silver Lining" and the Boys' Cadet Corps and Marching Band, in scarlet uniforms with gilt buttons, strutting into the store, which also boasted a drum and bugle corps, a 30-piece orchestra, a Scottish bagpipe band, and an annual choral festival. Wanamaker's employees also had their own restaurants, clinics, libraries, pension plans, and gymnasium. As women gradually replaced men as department store salesclerks, Wanamaker's won a reputation among the growing ranks of salesgirls as "a very good store to work in," according to one contemporary. Indeed, John Wanamaker himself championed women's suffrage and was among the first to send women buyers to Paris in search of new fashion trends in everything from lingerie to lamps. By the turn of the century, women department store buyers had become the rule, not the exception—and in 1946, Dorothy Shaver took the helm of Lord & Taylor, becoming New York's first woman department store CEO.

For customers, Wanamaker's elaborate, Paris-inspired fashion shows, with such themes as the Garden of Allah, were society events duly reported in the press. But if merchandising was theater, to Wanamaker it was also education. His advertising invited shoppers to the store for "an education in what was new": he himself led customers on tours of the basement power plants that ran his stores, the first to be lit by electricity and the first to sell the Marconi wireless. He enhanced not only the store's but also his own image by the "advertorials" he regularly placed—although, on religious principles, never on Sunday—in the newspapers, expressing such tenets of his retailing philosophy as "the customer's right to know," "one price, and that the lowest," and "duty to an employee beyond the mere payment of wages." His personal standing grew, too, from his long tenure as president of the YMCA, his position as a Sunday school

Dolls of the Jerome Park race course at Macy's

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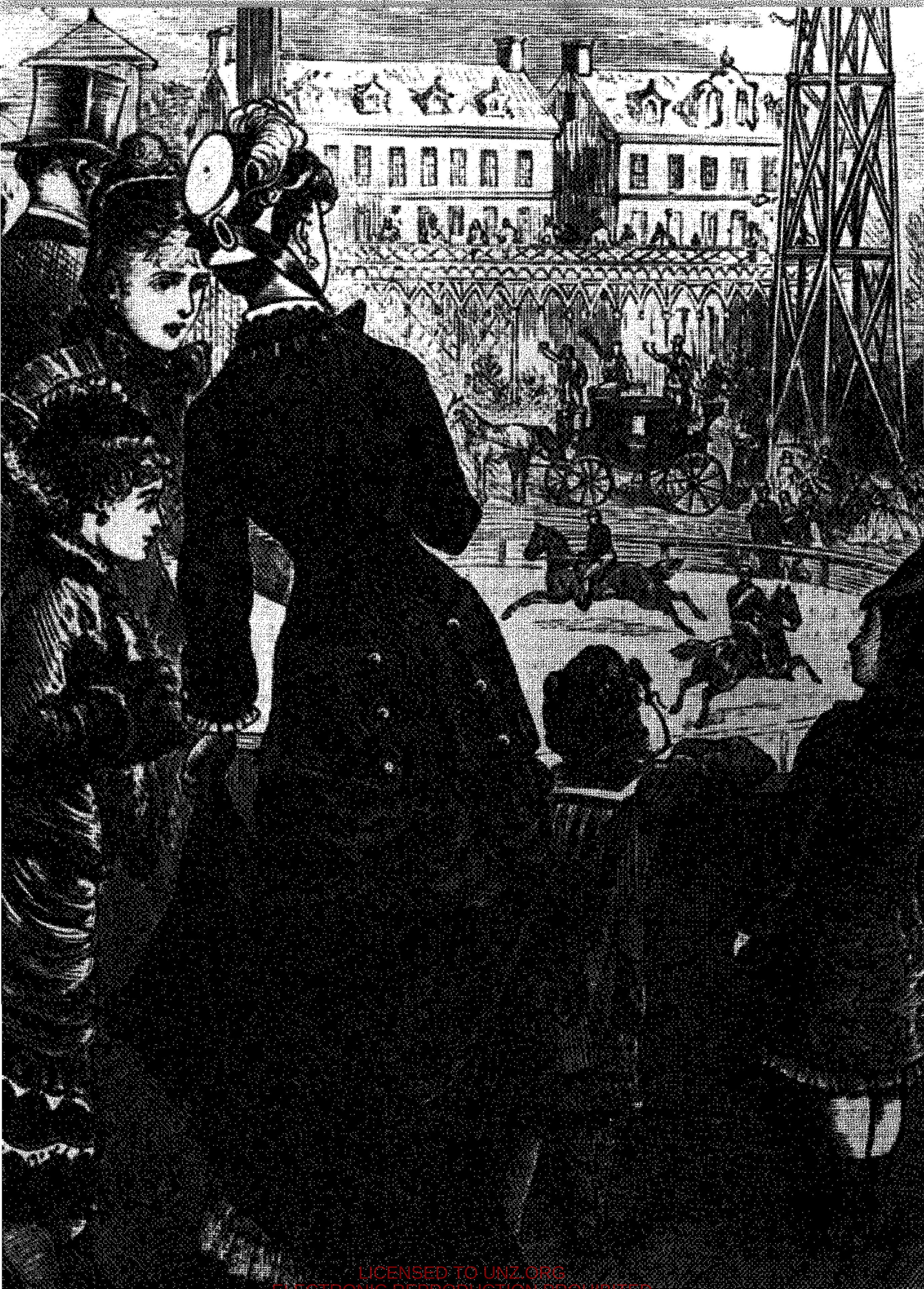
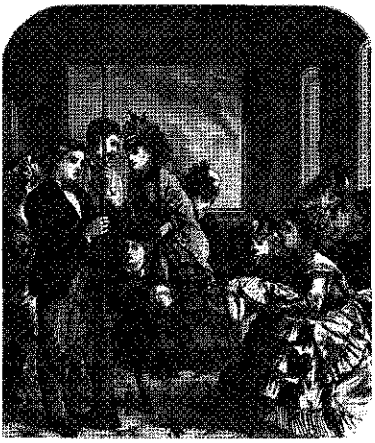




THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

Opening day at Lord & Taylor's

superintendent, and his support for Christian missionary work. Perhaps that explains why, unlike Stewart, Wanamaker had no trouble assuming a cabinet post. Benjamin Harrison appointed him postmaster general in 1889, and he won praise for having used his business skills to improve the efficiency of the mails.

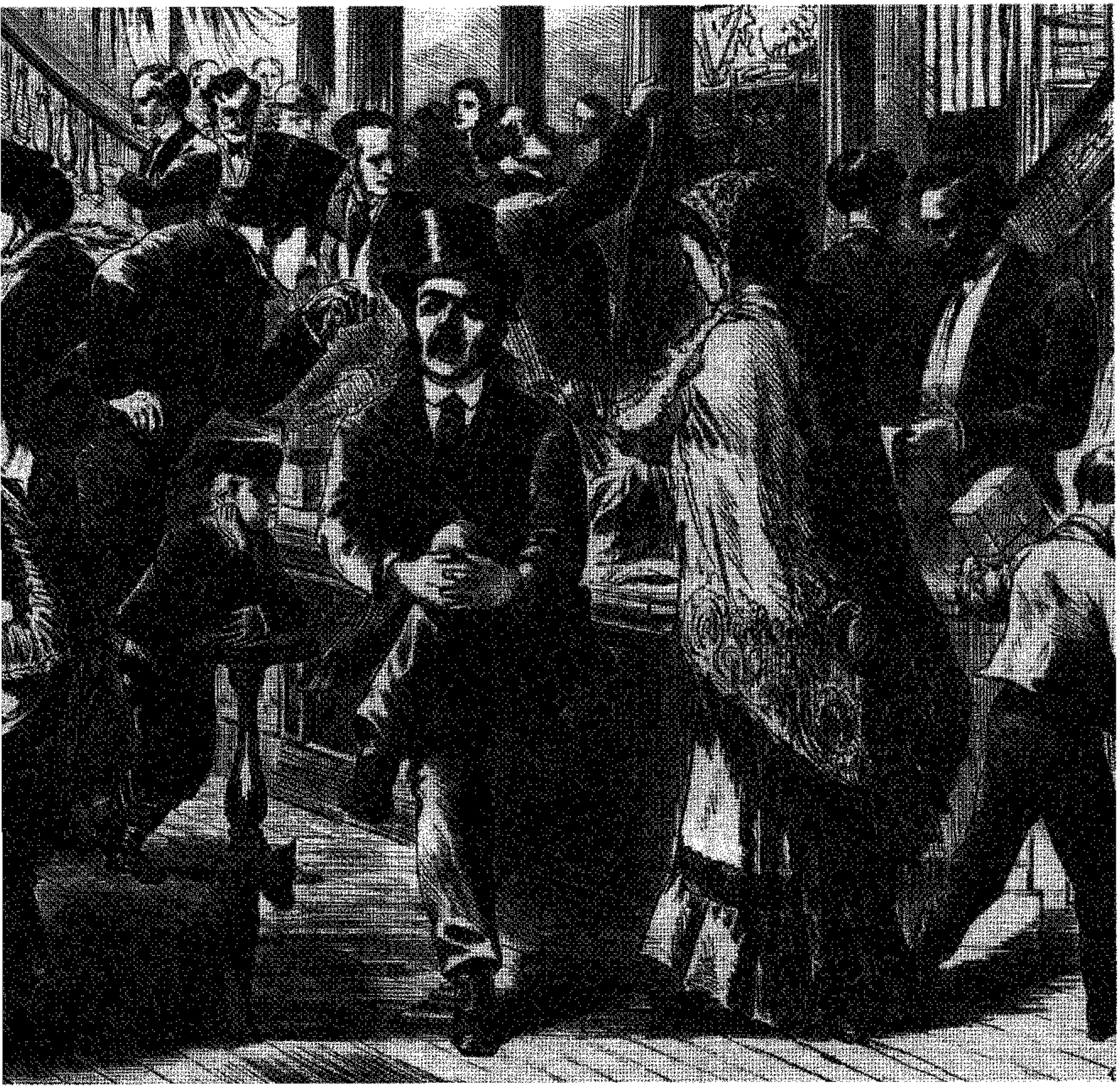
When he died in 1922, thousands of Philadelphians came to pay their respects where his body lay in state at Bethany Presbyterian Church. The City Council, the public schools, and the Philadelphia Stock Exchange closed on the day of his funeral, attended by Thomas Edison, William Jennings Bryan, Chief Justice William Howard Taft, U.S. senators and governors from Pennsylvania and New York, and fellow retail giants like the Strauses of Macy's and the president of Marshall Field's, the new royalty of urban commerce.

Since the dawn of the new century, these moguls had been building department stores all over the country. In New York the Siegel-Cooper store opened at 18th Street and Sixth Avenue in 1896, with financing arranged by Goldman, Sachs. A steel-framed stone building six stories high, elaborately embellished in glazed terra-cotta, it was topped by a huge greenhouse and a roof-garden restaurant. A marble staircase rose through the atrium, and in the center of the main floor a marble fountain lit with colored lights was the setting for sculptor Daniel Chester French's monumental female figure *The Republic.*

Crowds 150,000 strong jammed Sixth Avenue from curb to curb for the Saturday night opening of what the *New York Times* called "a shopping resort" and other newspapers described under such headlines as THE MOST STUPENDOUS ACHIEVEMENT IN THE ANNALS OF GREATER NEW YORK'S COMMERCIAL GRANDEUR. When the store opened for business the following Monday, ambulances had to be called for those who had fainted in the excitement or who had been wounded in the press of the crowds.

Eight thousand clerks and 1,000 drivers and packers worked for "The Big Store: A City in Itself." It housed an epicurean food department selling pâté de foie gras in bulk, a post office that mailed purchases to anywhere in the world, a telegraph office for more urgent communications, a foreign-currency exchange for any overseas shopper suddenly caught short of dollars, stock-trading services for those who might feel the need to increase their earnings to keep up with their expenditures, and—for anyone over-

CULVER PICTURES, INC.



Early department stores were palaces of commerce that rivaled the mansions of millionaires.

come by the Big Store experience—a doctor's office and a drug department, where one could fill a prescription or be fitted for a truss. The store also boasted a dentist's office, an employment agency for domestic servants, luxurious manicuring and hairdressing parlors, a barber shop where "especial attention is paid to children's haircutting," the largest photography gallery in the world, a bird and animal department that sold not just monkeys and tropical fish but also lion and panther cubs, and a nursery where shoppers could leave their babies in cribs under the watchful eye of trained nurses. The crowning wonders were a rooftop conservatory resplendent with blooming lilies throughout the winter and a tower from which a 36-inch lens projected a light visible for 30 miles "for the benefit of the public in signaling the results of elections . . . and for the benefit of the Big Store by throw-

ing advertising announcements upon the lower surface of clouds by night," as a brochure for the store described it.

Siegel-Cooper also maintained a private bank in which customers could deposit money for future purchases. But while the store's founder, Henry Siegel, shared the retailing vision of Stewart and Wanamaker, he lacked their business ethics. Fifteen thousand depositors lost their savings when the bank failed and it was disclosed that Siegel had embezzled millions of his customers' dollars. His conviction spelled the end of his retail empire.

Meanwhile, other merchant princes were carving out realms of their own. In 1902, when Marshall Field's magnificent 12-story State Street store opened in Chicago, thousands of Chicagoans crowded the 1 million square feet of selling space, with its flower-bedecked aisles and counters, while string orchestras played. Field's associate Gordon Selfridge announced, "We have built this great institution for the people."

The people responded with such enthusiasm that local businesses closed so their employees could visit Field's, and Mayor Carter Harrison gave his blessing to the festivities' continuation for another week. Other department store magnates picked up Selfridge's populist theme, including Wanamaker, who advertised his store as "the people's store, owned and managed by Mr. Wanamaker," and the Gimbel brothers, who announced, "We do not call it 'our store.' It's your store." Selfridge, who took what he learned in Chicago back to London to found his own department store, probably put it best when he described the department store as "a community center."

The downtown stores became meeting places for friends and led to a mingling of classes. The stores democratized retailing. Every potential customer, even a shopgirl on her day off, was to be treated as a lady. For those who couldn't afford the exclusive salons within, the stores introduced bargain basements. And no one had to worry about being embarrassed at having to ask a price or wonder whether haggling was expected; prices were fixed and clearly marked. The one-price policy, necessitated by the larger sales forces that a proprietor could no longer rely on to bargain for him, homogenized the market.

One of the leading merchants on the Ladies' Mile in the 1860s was Rowland H. Macy, a Nantucket Quaker, whose Sixth Avenue "Grand Mercantile Establishment" occupied the entire block-front between 13th and 14th Streets and employed 1,000 men and women. Macy's slogan was "Goods suitable for the millionaire, at prices in reach of the millions." In 1867 his store became the first retail establishment to stay open until midnight on Christmas Eve, and in 1874 it unveiled a display of elegantly costumed dolls in its first Christmas windows, which became an annual tradition.

After Macy's death in the late 1870s, the sons of a German Jewish immigrant peddler named Straus acquired a controlling interest in Macy's. They expanded and remodeled the store; in 1896 they presented a lavish Christmas window display of toys moved by hidden machinery. Crowds jammed the sidewalk for a glimpse.

In 1902, the year Field's celebrated its momentous Chicago opening, Isidor and Nathan Straus decided to move the store uptown—too far uptown, said critics, who predicted disaster—to the 34th Street block that had previously housed some of the city's most notorious brothels as well as a music hall in which Thomas Edison had projected one of the first motion pictures in 1896. The move proved prescient. The Sixth Avenue elevated trains discharged passengers at a station right at the store's corner entrance, and a nearby terminal for the Pennsylvania Railroad was on the drawing board. Macy's on Herald Square would eventually take over the entire block and would displace Wanamaker's as the nation's largest department store in 1924, a distinction that was being claimed by one newcomer after another.

The Straus family was one of many leading American retail dynasties founded by Jews of

Macy's Nathan Straus, at sea

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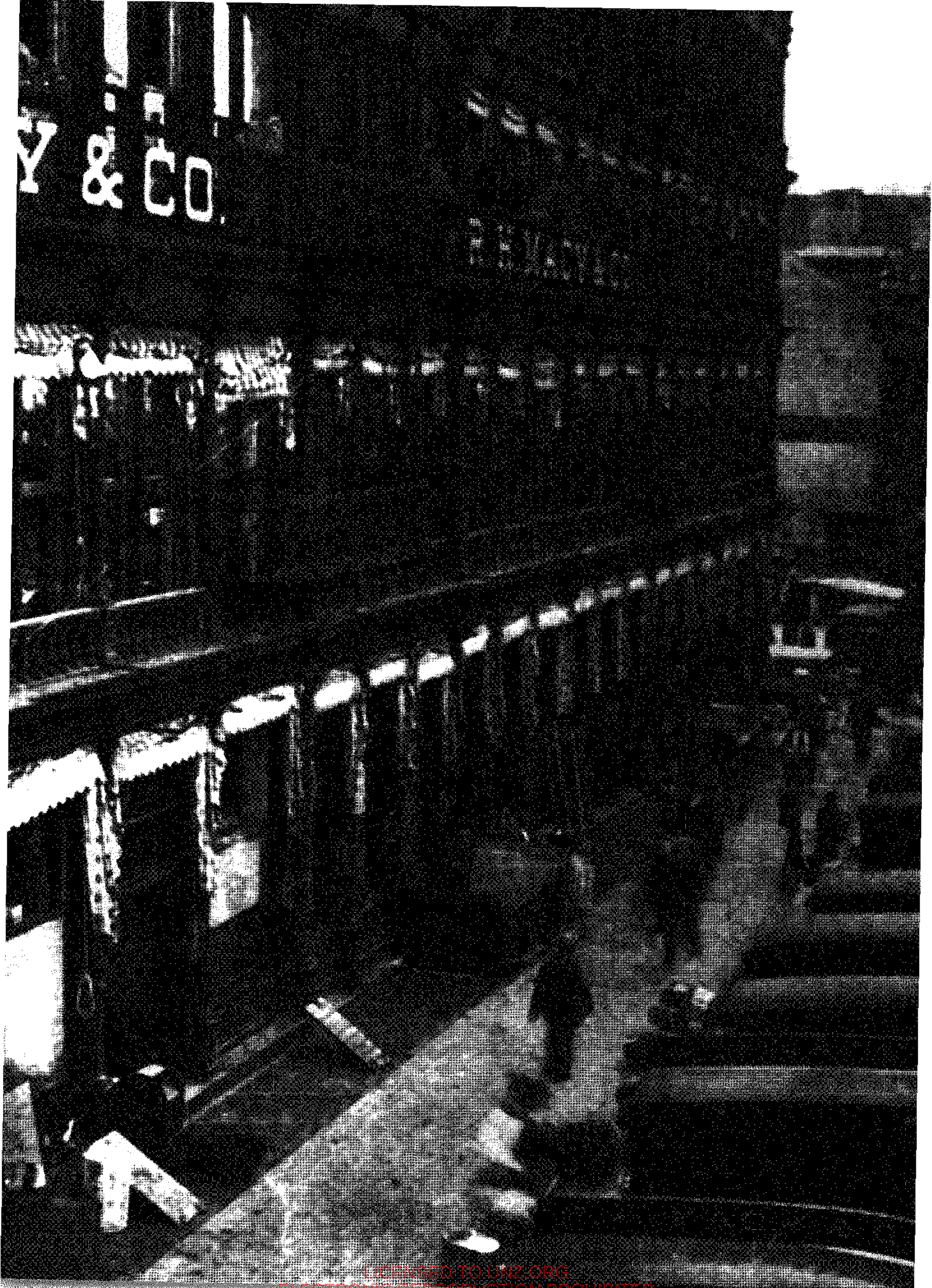
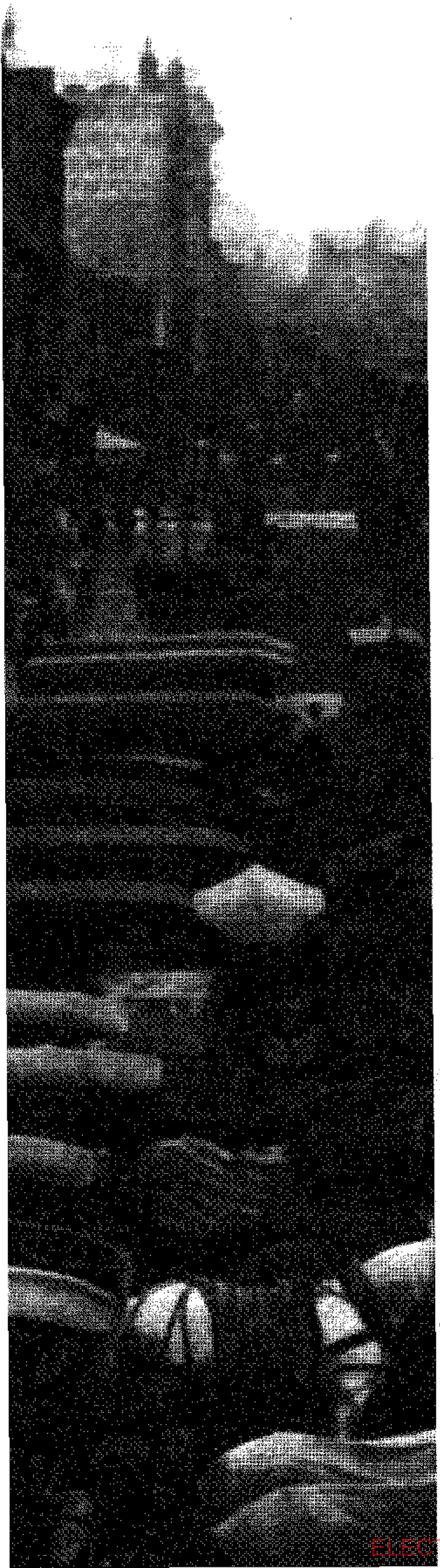

Y & CO.



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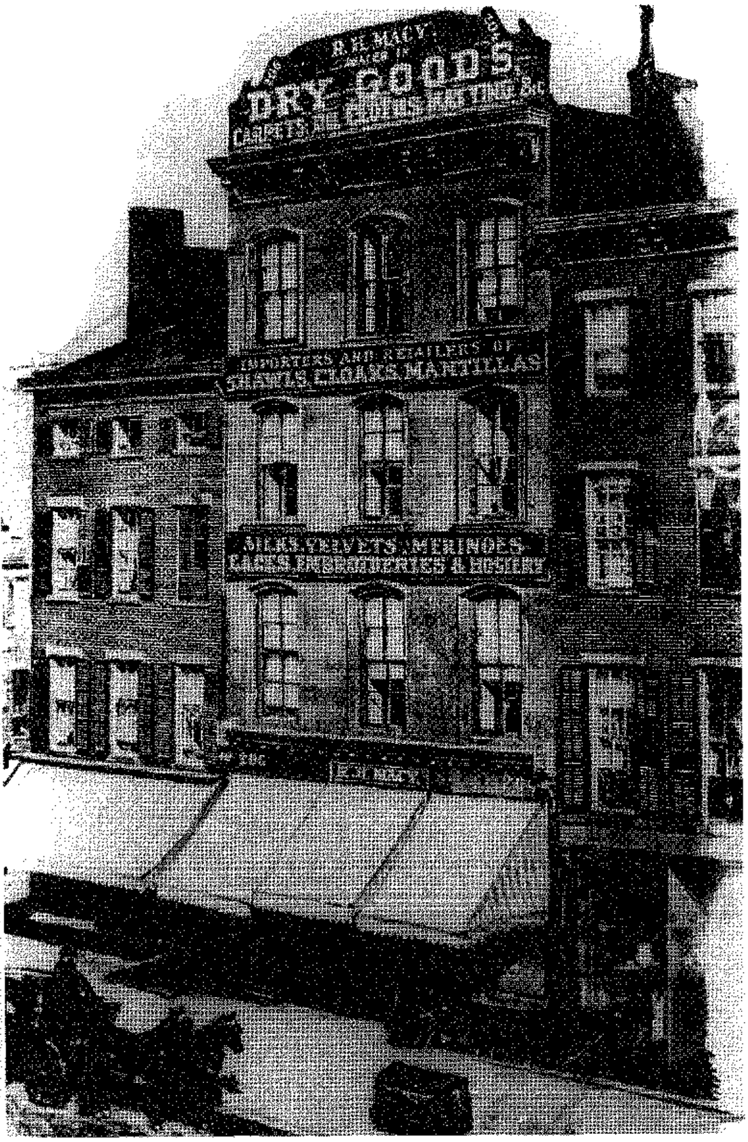

R. H. MACY
DEALER IN
DRY GOODS
CARPETS, OIL CLOTHS, MATTING &c
IMPORTERS AND RETAILERS OF
SHAWLS, CLOAKS, MANTILLAS
SILKS, VELVETS, MERINOES
LACES, EMBROIDERIES & HOSIERY
R. H. MACY

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

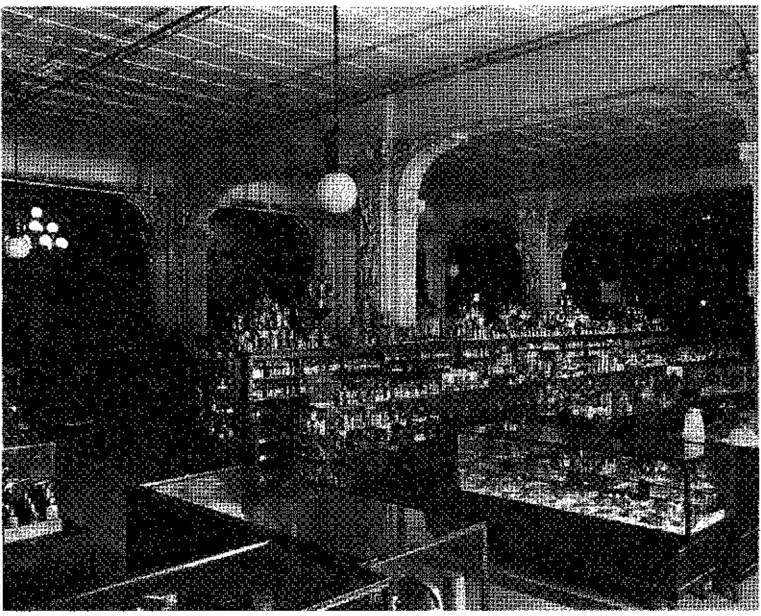
Wagons load and unload goods at Macy's 14th Street store (left); Macy's in its early days (above).

German descent, among them the Gimbels, Siegels, Filenes, Mays, Lazaruses, and Goldwaters. The Strauses entered legend when Isidor and his wife went down together on the *Titanic* after she refused to leave the sinking ship without him. His surviving brother, Nathan, forced out of the business by Isidor's sons, became a philanthropist, establishing a free library for children and distributing free pasteurized milk to mothers on Manhattan's Lower East Side. With Nathan's departure on the eve of World War I, his nephews Jesse and Percy took over as the store's president and vice president. Over the years their promotional innovations included the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade (which began in 1924), the largest electric store sign in New York, and the establishment of regular evening store hours, as well as a management training program that attracted such Ivy League graduates as the critic-to-be Dwight Macdonald and that later figured in Mary McCarthy's novel *The Group*. In the years between the two world wars, the Strauses emerged as the preeminent leaders in the retail world, the acknowledged successors to A. T. Stewart and John Wanamaker.

At the end of the nineteenth century, there were close to 1,000 department stores in American cities, including Zions in Salt Lake City, the only store whose founder—the Mormon leader Brigham Young—also founded a religion. The immigrant seamstress Mary Ann Magnin became the first woman to found a major American department store, San Francisco's I. Magnin—graciously named for her husband, Isaac, though it was her needlework that had first attracted the cus-

Ladies stock up on cosmetics before a wartime tax takes effect, 1941

UPI/BETTMANN



BROWN BROTHERS

Wanamaker's original store was a Philadelphia institution.

tom of the nouveau-riche ladies of Nob Hill.

Between 1900 and 1915, as many as two dozen major stores opened in New York City alone, including the classic limestone structure, unmarked by any sign but a discreet bronze tablet, that Benjamin Altman built on Murray Hill. In the 1920s the Gimbel brothers demolished the Tammany clubhouse between 49th and 50th Streets to erect Saks Fifth Avenue.

In an extraordinary coincidence, Altman and two other department store tycoons, Lyman Bloomingdale and Abraham Abraham of Abraham & Straus, had begun their retail careers in the mid-nineteenth century as clerks in the same Newark, New Jersey, dry goods store. By the time all three were presiding over their own grand stores, Altman was maintaining auxiliary stables in Saratoga Springs and the Hamptons to handle deliveries to important customers at their summer retreats. Among his many wealthy customers was the Witch of Wall Street, Hetty Green, a miser who left an estate of $94 million but during her lifetime was reluctant to part with a penny of it. When she returned a cheap length of fabric she had bought at Altman's, the owner offered her a full refund, not a common practice then. So impressed was the famously frugal Mrs. Green that she introduced Altman to her bankers and offered to guarantee his loans, thereby establishing his credit forever.

Some stores put on their own fashion shows.

THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

The early pioneers of retailing never forgot their humble beginnings as small shopkeepers. All during their active careers they strolled the aisles of their stores, inspiring trust among customers and setting an example for employees. The story is told of old Edwin Goodman, a lowly tailor at the turn of the century, arriving one day half a century later to find his fabulous Bergdorf Goodman on Fifth Avenue closed during business hours. He indignantly demanded to know why. When he was told that the store was closed for inventory in order to assess profits, he demanded, "Get me a cigar box!" One was produced. "Get me a needle!" Done. "Now a spool of thread!" As the entire staff watched, he held out the cigar box in which he had placed the needle and thread. "You see this?" he said. "This is what I started with. All the rest," gesturing around the elegant premises, "is profit."

Humble beginnings aside, the department store owners became tastemakers, definers of style from the Mauve Decade to the Second World War. By the 1920s, department stores were outstripping all other cultural institutions, including museums, as trendsetters. After a visit to the sensational Armory Show that introduced modern art to this country in 1913, the Gimbel brothers became devotees of the Cubists and began buying their paintings and hanging them in galleries in

BROWN BROTHERS

These shrines of shoes exemplify the store's clever marketing.

their stores. In 1918 Carson, Pirie, Scott in Chicago was first to exhibit the work of Americans like Bellows, Glackens, and Sloan. John Wanamaker, not to be outdone, took a personal interest in the exhibition of his Constables, Titians, and Turners, as they rotated between his New York and Philadelphia establishments. The interiors and windows of Saks Fifth Avenue premiered the designs of the 1925 Paris Exposition style that came to be known as Art Deco. Everything in the stores was stylish: noted industrial designers Raymond Loewy and Norman Bel Geddes began their illustrious careers, respectively, as the display directors at Macy's and the Franklin Simon store on Fifth Avenue. Three years later the curator of the Brooklyn Museum declared the department stores "the greatest influences for culture and taste that exist today. They make it possible for us all to participate in the creative thought of a new and revolutionary era."

By 1950 there were over 4,000 department stores in the United States, but their heyday was ending. Changing demographic patterns were shifting retail trade to suburban shopping malls. Many urban stores fell on hard times in the sixties as "downtown" became the increasingly desolate "inner city." Off-price retailers like Kmart, mail catalogers like Lands' End, and specialty retailers like the Gap increasingly challenged traditional department stores.

In the heady days of leveraged acquisitions in the seventies and eighties, when the New York City property market boomed, the stores' urban real estate came to seem their most valuable asset to the money men. When the real estate crash came at the end of the eighties, many of the stores that were still around finally went under.

The names of now defunct department stores can still be recited by many New Yorkers: Wanamaker's, McCreery's, and Hearn's disappeared in the fifties, Stern's in the sixties, Best & Company and Arnold Constable in the seventies, Altman's and Bonwit Teller in the eighties. Many of the great commercial palaces that once brought a touch of Haussmann's Paris to American cities exist today only in old photographs, ghostly presences in the city's memory. But a few department stores that once flourished on Ladies' Mile can still be seen, shorn of some of their former grandeur but still beautiful now that they've been refurbished and relit. The Siegel-Cooper store has become Bed, Bath and Beyond on Sixth Avenue at 18th Street, and the former W. & J. Sloane furniture emporium has been reborn as ABC Carpet at 18th Street and Broadway.

Yet even though so many of the great department stores that helped to shape the modern city are gone, the new kind of merchandising they created still provides a vision of the good life that everyone can aspire to. If their moment has passed, their influence remains, in our longings. ●

Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, a tradition since 1924

BROWN BROTHERS

Urbanities

A New Order for Office Buildings

David Watkin

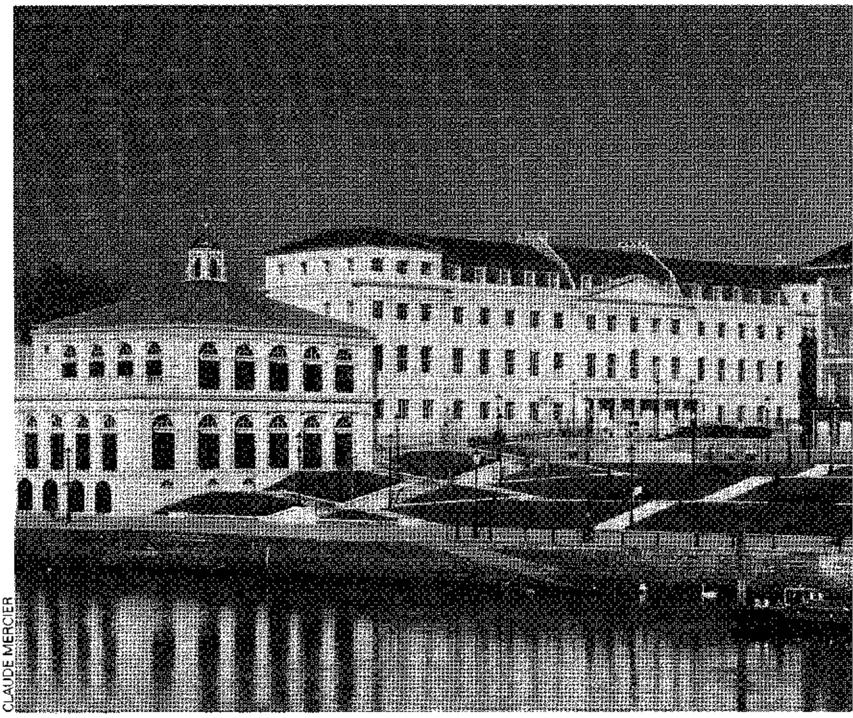
While Le Corbusier's view that the house is a machine for living in is now widely discredited as an error that produced an inhumane and brutal modern architecture, the notion that the office is a machine for working in seems superficially more reasonable. That's what makes Quinlan Terry's Richmond Riverside office development, completed in 1988, so important a turning point in the history of architecture. The huge success of this sprawling traditionalist structure as a real estate investment, a functional home for the most modern corporations, and an architectural monument instantly embraced by the public shows that we've been wrong to accept any part of architectural modernism's mechanistic doctrine.

The business activity that underpins the life we all lead in the West by no means requires the bleak, widely disliked office towers that have torn out the hearts of cities across the world. Richmond Riverside shows us that there is another and nobler way to build offices so that they can be poetic, moving, and lovely—and still contain all the modern technology required by the corporate clients that occupy them, such as Compaq, the world-class computer company. This is not a theory but a reality, achieved here and now in Richmond, on the outskirts of London, where the architect and the developers can claim to have expanded the limits of the possible.

It's easy to see why modernism's graph paper–grid office blocks might seem plausible homes for modern business. They seem associated with so many of corporate industrial society's ideals: rationality, unsentimentality, efficiency, modernity, and mass production. They seem to express the spirit of our industrial age. Such, for example, was the claim of the celebrated architectural historian Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, writing about the then-new modernist architecture of Walter Gropius in 1936: "The creative energy of this world which we want to master, a world of science and technique, of speed and danger, of hard struggles and no personal security, is glorified in Gropius's architecture." This kind of architecture is inevitable in our century, Pevsner asserted, "a century as cold as steel and glass, a century the precision of which leaves less space for self-expression than did any period before."

But the now widely held assumption that the cold, antihistorical, and aggressive forms of much modern architecture are somehow inevitable for office developments, and that

Richmond Riverside shows us that there is a nobler way to



CLAUDE MERCIER

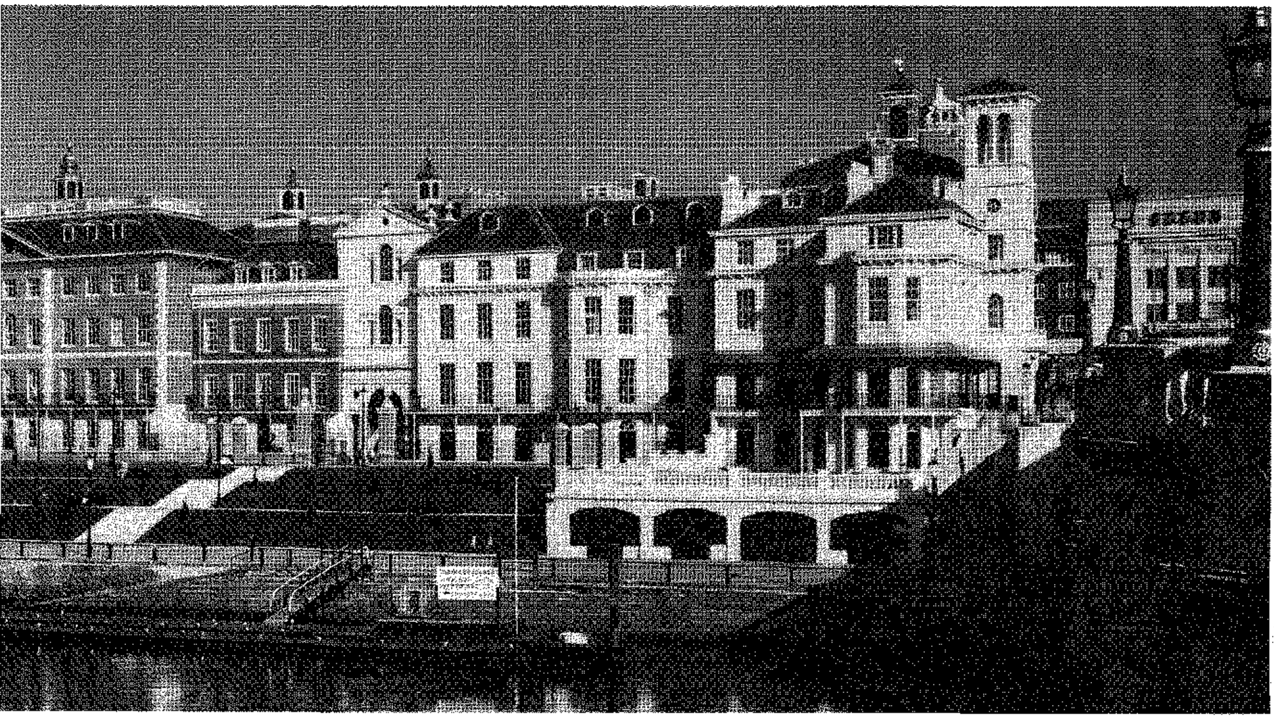
JAMES MORTIMER/THE SUNDAY TIMES, LONDON

Quinlan Terry

we are not really free to choose more pleasing alternatives, is wrong on three fatal counts. First, as I argued in *Morality and Architecture,* it is just not true that there is a Zeitgeist, or "spirit of the age," as Hegel and Marx asserted. German philosophy notwithstanding, each age does not have an overriding collective will, expressing itself in all forms of endeavor, the ages succeeding one another in thesis and antithesis in a progress toward the birth of the new man. So in the twentieth century, there is no single set of universally acceptable answers to the moral, political, and social questions of the age—answers that are so absolutely mirrored in a particular type of architecture that individuals are no more at liberty to reject the architecture than they are free to abstain from the rest of the package. This is pernicious nonsense that in most areas of life, outside of the arts, most thinking people have rejected.

Second, the answers that modernists gave to the moral, social, and political questions of the age—answers their architecture supposedly embodies—turned out to be grievously wrong. The notions that our century is, as Pevsner called it, a "time of overpowering collective energy"; that the individual is not to oppose the overpowering collective will, which is pregnant with history; that there is little room for self-expression or for "the warm and direct feelings of the great men of the past"; that

build offices. The main restaurant in on the left, with Whittaker House just to its right.



twentieth-century architecture should be "totalitarian"—how much tragedy sprang from ideas like these.

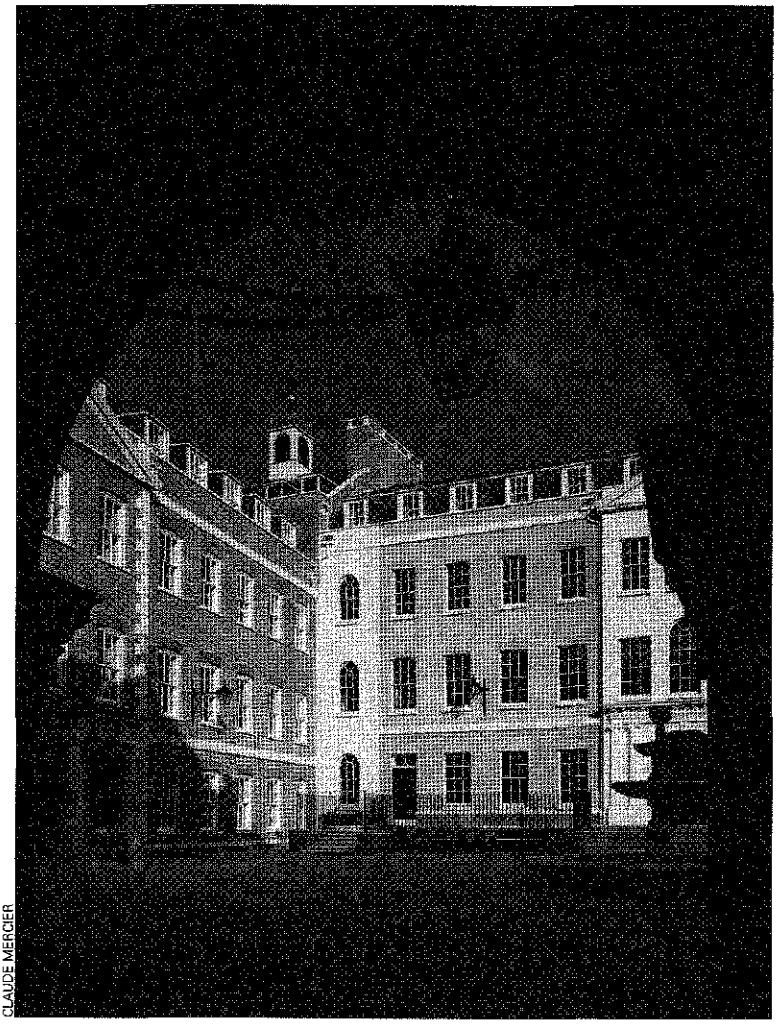
Third, more than a decade's experience of corporate restructuring has left the hierarchical, bureaucratic idea of business life that these buildings express looking quaint and obsolete. Their vision of compartmentalized functions, of layer upon layer of faceless, interchangeable clerks and managers processing their little bits of the company's information flow, of the company itself as a standardized, inhuman machine rather than a unique and flexible human organization—all these are yesterday's new ideas.

The sprawling suburb of Richmond, ten miles west of central London, has a historic urban core of Georgian and Victorian buildings on the banks of the Thames. A large area in the center had become a classic example of "urban blight," where empty buildings decayed while planners dithered. Before Quinlan Terry's arrival on the site in 1983, a succession of developers and architects had been entangled in planning procedures for 15 long years. During most of that time the architects, working for the English Property Company (EPC), had envisioned building 106,000 square feet of office space to be rented as one or two units to big corporate users. The planners in the Richmond Borough Council, however, had the unusual good sense to argue that such huge blocks would be out of sympathy with the modest human scale of the existing buildings. They asked that the offices should appear to be a group of different buildings, though the same floor levels would be continued throughout. They also wanted brick to be used, but just as a veneer on a concrete frame.

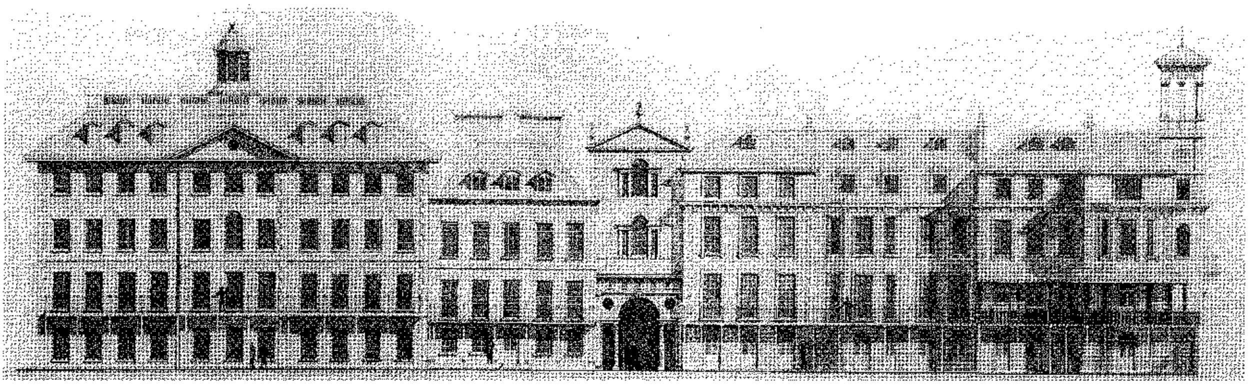
EPC finally obtained planning approval from the Richmond Borough Council but, wearied with the years of negotiation, were happy to sell the property to Haslemere Estates PLC. The exciting part of the story now

Steps lead invitingly from Heron Square to the river.

CLAUDE MERCIER


CLAUDE MERCIER

Despite rigid building regulations, Heron Square is beautiful.



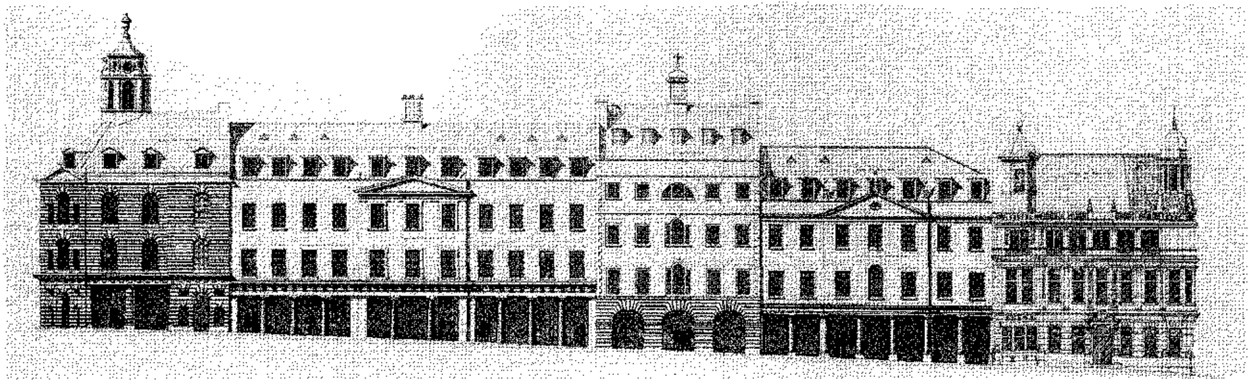
Hotham House is to the left of Richmond Riverside's river front, Tower House to the right.

COURTESY ERITH & TERRY ARCHITECTS (3)

begins: Haslemere agreed to buy the site on condition that its plans, designed by Quinlan Terry, would be accepted. Why Terry? The reason was that he was busy revolutionizing modern office building with the speculative block he was building for Haslemere in central London, at Dufours Place, in Soho. He designed this in a traditional Georgian style, even adopting traditional load-bearing brick construction. Begun in the spring of 1982, it included, at the planners' insistence, a mix of uses: thus, apart from offices, it contains 25 apartments, a light industrial area, a doctor's office, and underground parking. Planning approval had been granted for an eight-story glass-and-concrete block, but Terry would have none of this. Keeping the eight stories, including the basement, and providing the same floor area, he provided cheerful red-brick exteriors with white-painted, wooden sash windows and a jaunty cupola. All this was so charming and so welcoming that people wanted to come and live and work there. Dufours Place was let even before it was finished in 1983, in contrast to existing offices in adjacent streets, which, for rent in 1982, were still unrented after Dufours Place was opened.

One of the most encouraging chapters in recent real estate development now unfolded, when Haslemere Estates decided to take the risk of applying the Dufours pattern to a vaster, $29 million development in Richmond. The given conditions at Richmond were the planning approval granted to EPC, the need to preserve two historic buildings along the river—landmarked by the government for their historic interest—the slope of the site, the presence of the river, and the whole historic character of eighteenth-century Richmond.

Haslemere Estates carried out the development in association with the Pensions Fund Property Unit Trust, a tax-exempt mutual fund established to enable pension funds to invest in the property market. Together they agreed to lease the 15 separate buildings as different moderately sized units, though the overall floor area was much the same as that proposed by EPC. They believed that, despite the predominance of single, monolithic office developments in London, there was still a demand for middle-sized premises. Instead of treating the site as if it were one large building subdivided, Terry provided attached but separate houses with real party walls. His buildings are what they seem, individual architectural entities, yet they give the illusion that they have grown over time, for they recall traditional town centers in which buildings of different periods rub shoulders happily with one another. They conform to a common vernacular—in this case, English Georgian—yet have details in different styles. The architectural historian can catch references to Venetian Gothic, Palladian, Baroque,



Shops fill the ground floor behind the arcade in Richmond Riverside's north front.

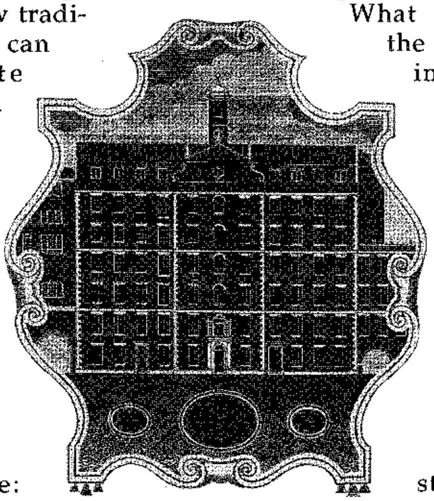
Georgian, and Greek Revival styles, with allusions to such architectural masters as Bernini, Palladio, Longhena, Sansovino, Hawksmoor, and Chambers. But most visitors will hardly recognize these sources, seeing only a harmonious vernacular scheme enlivened by joyous details with a consistently witty, "over the top" flavor.

The situation of Quinlan Terry's buildings on the banks of the Thames helps explain their architectural character, which deliberately harmonizes with that of the adjacent London riverside of Georgian Richmond, Twickenham, and Kew. Terry's buildings are invitingly open to the river through terraces and lawns, yet they also form a group that has a powerfully urban character. We have a sense of public streets with traffic, contrasting with those magical enclosures and squares that we find in Italian cities.

At the heart of the whole complex is Heron Square, a cloistered pedestrian retreat that is a key statement of the way in which beautiful urban spaces can be created despite the endless modern regulations concerning planning, building, and safety. These are often believed to be inimical to traditional planning, but Richmond Riverside is triumphant proof of the nonsense of that claim. The required access for fire engines is cleverly contrived through two richly ornamental archways that had to be four meters by three meters. In other hands, these dimensions would produce arches of an ugly shape, but Terry made them appear taller by the use of higher columns on each side, supporting an entablature that is higher than the actual opening. The curvaceous window above is from Borromini, while above this is yet another Roman Baroque window with a frame terminating in two broadly projecting ears or lugs that have led it to be known, unkindly, as the Prince of Wales window. Right in the middle of Heron Square splashes a central fountain, derived from a Renaissance example in Bologna. The small square paving stones of granite in the square cover a reinforced concrete raft forming the roof of the underground garage. In the center of the square's south side is an archway with a flight of steps leading enticingly down to the river.

As Terry points out, modern buildings, with their flat roofs and excessive use of glass, consistently fail in functional terms. One of many notorious examples is Sir James Stirling's History Faculty Building at Cambridge University, which developed so many cracks and leaks that, less than 20 years after its completion in 1967—when it had received an award from the Royal Institute of British Architects—the university considered demolishing it rather than facing the cost of continuous repairs. Terry insists, by contrast, that in the wet northern climate of England four thick walls and a pitched roof are what is always needed. All the buildings at

Richmond are built in load-bearing brick, so that the external walls, stronger and more durable than most modern materials, carry the load of the floors and the Welsh slate roof above. However, the internal walls are often in reinforced concrete, to increase the net rentable area. The roofs sport decorative cupolas disguising extractor ducts for the air-conditioning system and the basement garage. This last device is one of Quinlan Terry's most brilliant triumphs, for it shows how traditional forms can incorporate every kind of modern technical amenity. Terry also echoes the rich colors and textures of English eighteenth-century architecture: red and yellow bricks, stucco, tiles with curled ends, flat tiles, slate and lead, sash and casement windows, as well as all the five orders of columns and capitals: Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite.



Haslemere stipulated that the floors be marketed open plan; as Terry laconically points out, "Work on the interiors, as with all modern office developments, is carried out after the tenant purchases the property." This practice has a long history. Successful classical architects, from J. H. Mansart, who designed the Place Vendôme in Paris (1698), to John Nash, who designed Carlton House Terrace in London (1827), were wise enough to know that the rich, rightly or wrongly, would wish to commission interior decorators to design their own interiors. They thus ran up imposing facades designed to a united plan, leaving the purchasers of the individual houses to choose designers for the interiors. What matters is the external civic image, not the ever-changing fashions imposed by interior decorators.

Terry's frontage on the River Thames is an amalgam of new work and restored landmarked buildings. Like a painter, he has created a varied, animated, yet harmonious composition in which brick facades jostle with those in stucco, below a lively skyline of pediments, gables, attic windows, and cupolas. Tower House at the east end, an Italianate design by Henry Laxton of 1856, was remodeled by Terry as a restaurant and flats. Here and in the adjacent Palm Court, also of the 1850s, the front wall was retained, though all details are new. Next is South Gate, a gateway building by Quinlan Terry with arched Venetian windows in a Palladian style, replacing a mean building of the 1930s. It leads up to Heron Square through an archway inspired by those at Palladio's Basilica at Vicenza. Next is the modest Heron House, a listed building of 1716, roofless by 1983 and in need of complete restoration. At the west corner of the main river frontage is Hotham House, a monumental building by Terry. A type familiar from English seventeenth-century country houses, it is 11 bays long with a central pediment, its roof surmounted by a cheerful domed belvedere. The broadly projecting eaves cleverly contain air-conditioning outlets in coffered panels.

Running from north to south at the west end of the site is Whittaker House, a stuccoed terrace of 21 bays looking like part of a never-completed Regency square and described by Terry as a watered-down version of a 1760s design by Sir William Chambers for a never-executed palace at Richmond for King George III. Adjacent to Whittaker House on the river is one of the most memorable buildings in the whole development, the main restaurant. With its round-arched colonnades on both main stories, it has a Palladian Venetian flavor, appropriate to its riverside setting. Terry was delighted to find that Haslemere Estates, appreciating the visual importance of this key building, accepted the rich and expensive ornament he proposed, including a lead roof and stone Ionic capitals on the first floor.

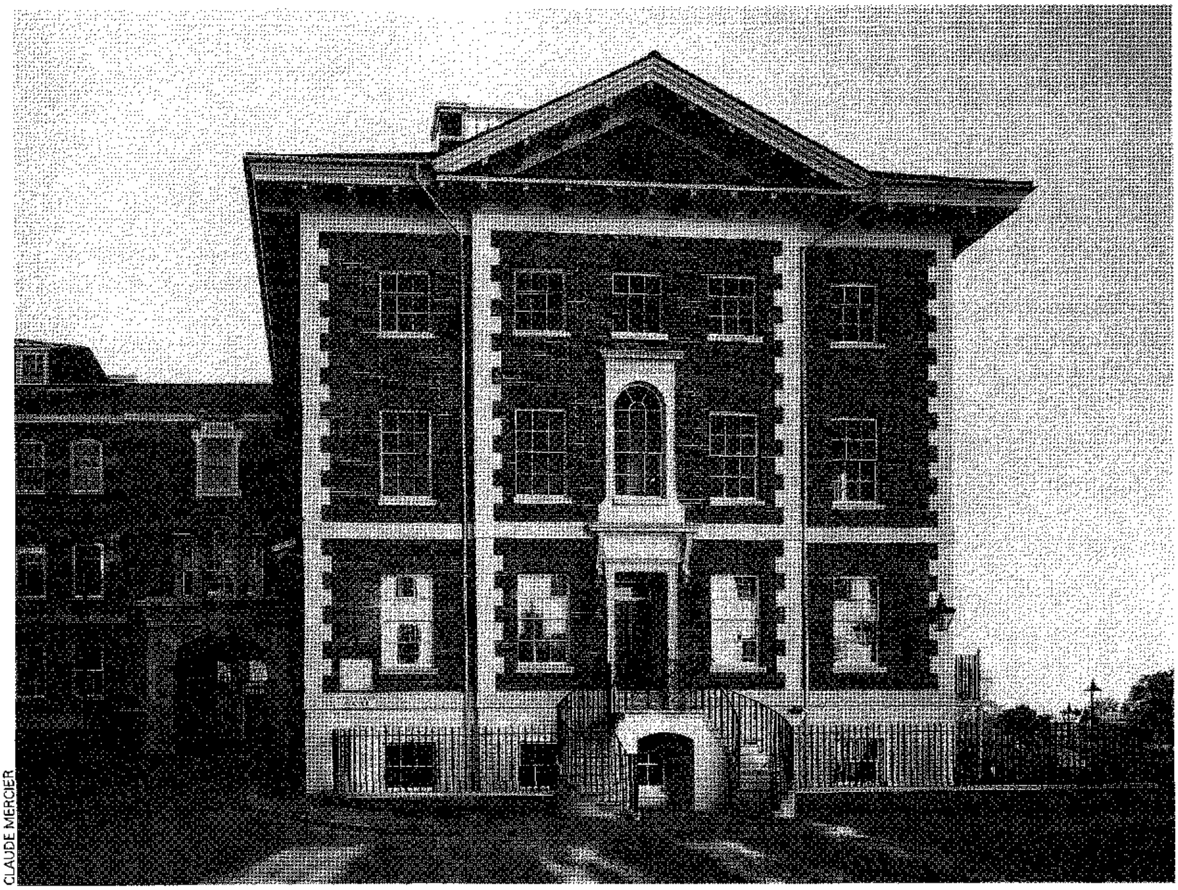
Adjacent to this beautiful restaurant is a long and broad flight of shallow steps leading up from the Thames to a new public open space known as Whittaker Square, lying between Whittaker House and Hotham House. This handsome staircase, which is aligned with the existing War Memorial, is flanked by the required zigzag ramps for wheelchairs. Three more flights of steps rise through the three levels of beautiful terraced lawns, which Terry designed to link his buildings to the river—and whose walks and benches are always filled. One might suppose that any architect would make equally good use of a Thames-side site: that this is not so is obvious to anyone who visits the graceless Hayward Gallery and National Theatre complex of the 1960s, built in the form of a series of bunkers in grim, gray concrete by Sir Denys Lasdun on the South Bank site in central London. The Prince of Wales commented ironically that they "seemed like a clever way of building a nuclear power station in the middle of London without anyone objecting." One glance at the New York waterfront will also show that good buildings do not sprout up spontaneously on good sites. (See "The Wasted Waterfront," page 58.)

Quinlan Terry's north and east frontages have arcaded ground floors containing shops, like the historic English towns of Winchester and Chester, with their Roman origins. Providing welcome shelter from the weather, the arcades boast anti-graffiti paint and columns in four orders: Greek Doric, Roman Doric, Tuscan, and Corinthian. The columns have no bases, to allow their heights to increase down the gradient of the sloping site. In the main building on the north side, recalling ambitious early-Victorian commercial buildings in provincial market towns, the stumpy columns carry a huge load and so have an appropriately pronounced entasis, the bulging profile of early Doric columns. On the east side, Terry introduced a simple Gothic building resembling backstreet houses in Venice. As Terry envisioned, the building already looks like one of the Victorian additions that bring such character to English towns.

MARK FIENNES

The development has a lively skyline (above); Dufours Place (left).

Richmond Riverside represents a victory for real estate developers as well as for those who believe that the values of traditional cities can be retained in the modern world. Though totally contemporary in its provision of technological services, it puts us in direct touch with the past in an


CLAUDE MERCIER

Hotham House's eaves conceal air conditioning outlets (above); the east side's archway (right).

extraordinarily moving way. It attracts a vast range of admirers, including those who work in it as well as local residents and tourists, and it is popular as a film location, as a setting for fashion photography, and for office workers to eat lunch in or to sit and rest on its welcoming terraces. This life-enhancing place makes possible what was thought impossible: that a massive commercial development with 106,000 square feet of office space, 10,600 square feet of shops, 28 apartments, two restaurants, and underground parking for 135 cars can be inserted into a historic town center without ruining it—can, indeed, improve it, through good manners, charm, and wit.

Richmond also gave the lie to the myth that traditional buildings are more expensive than "modern." A director of Haslemere Estates, interviewed on television at the completion of Richmond, gave the figure of £80 per square foot to build Richmond, compared with over £100 per square foot to build normal air-conditioned modern office space in central London. Quinlan Terry says that the answer as to whether traditional construction is commercially advantageous also "depends on the greed of the developer in a seller's market." He goes on to explain that "1989 was the first time since the war that office rents went down. Till then it was a seller's market, when rent was computed on the basis of the total lettable area times the market rent per square foot. That is why modern developers put such a high priority on the lettable area. Since 1989 we have had a buyer's market, where the tenant will look for quality of space, prestigious external appearance, as well as quantity. The big question today is whether it will let at all." He points out that proof of the success of traditionally designed buildings is that, while vast areas of office accommodation in London re-

CLAUDE MERCIER

main empty, Dufours Place and Richmond Riverside are both fully leased. Moreover, he adds that most modern offices are built to last for only 30 years, but traditional buildings, built to last for generations, are more attractive at the later rent reviews.

By far the largest single tenant at Richmond is Compaq UK, occupying one whole building as well as two sides of Heron Square. The Compaq staff, well aware of the significance of these buildings in the history of office design, are delighted with them visually and functionally, and they take the riverside setting and wealth of restaurants as an added bonus. "We're more than happy," says Compaq UK's boss, Joe McNally. With its full floors and hidden cabling for computer networks, McNally says, "the development is perfectly capable of supporting a high-tech company." Staff members pointed out to me that the buildings are so well known that everyone knows where to find them: a tremendous tribute to Terry's ability to create a sense of local and national identity.

However popular Richmond Riverside is with its tenants, with the general public, and with the Prince of Wales, the architectural establishment has universally criticized it for its supposed "Disneyland" character—an idealized and therefore fraudulent evocation of a past that was never so clean and perfect—and for the contrast between its exteriors and its open-plan, fluorescent-lit office interiors. Though the last criticism has some force, remember that clients demanded interiors of this kind. Without them, there would have been no Richmond Riverside, and the facades have surely given more pleasure than the interiors have caused pain.

The Disneyland criticism is easy to answer. Richmond Riverside belongs to the so-called Picturesque planning tradition, developed in late-eighteenth-century England. In this tradition, buildings were designed to summon up a range of associations: they could evoke history through the use of past styles, or they could blend into their landscape settings to suggest harmony with nature. A perfect example is John Nash's Regent Street, built from 1818 as a commentary on and a dialogue with the traditional buildings in English towns. Nash deliberately designed Regent Street to resemble the episodic grouping of the historic High Street at Oxford. For the facade of the County Fire Office on Regent Street, he took as his model, at the request of the client, the demolished seventeenth-century gallery at Old Somerset House, a former royal residence, then believed to be by Inigo Jones. So, too, did Terry provide an echo at Richmond of a royal palace, though one never built. In a broader sense, at Richmond Terry brilliantly arrived at exactly the same conclusions as Nash in his inventive use of the legacy of the past.

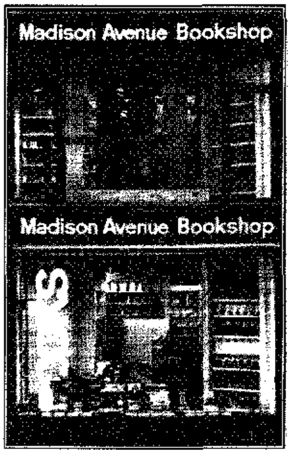
Terry's frequent reference to earlier buildings, many of which he has drawn in Continental sketchbooks, is in harmony with the methods of Nash and other great architects of the past. Terry also explains his echoes of these buildings at Richmond Riverside and elsewhere as a necessary consequence of the speed with which the modern architect has to work: Terry had six months between receiving the commission for Richmond and going to tender, so he had to tax his memory and imagination heavily to produce the details. As he points out, an architect must put in all the ornament on the drawings at the start of a commission, for he can never hope to add it later.

Richmond Riverside is the greatest triumph of Quinlan Terry's personal onslaught on modernism. About Terry himself is a total consistency running through the man, his work, and his ideals. A handsome man upholding traditional values and traditionally courteous and reserved behavior, Terry and his buildings are all of a piece. With his old-fashioned, well-cut tweed suits and his perfect manners, he is everyone's idea of the traditional English gentleman, an ideal of selfhood remote from the norm current today. Born in 1937, he has constructed a persona in deliberate contrast to the values embodied in Bryanston, the public school in which he was educated, a modern, liberal establishment where pupils wore open-necked shirts and called their parents by their first names.

He is the ideal paterfamilias, with his lively Polish wife, also trained as an architect, his children, and his grandchildren. He lives in a modest classical house in a tiny English village deep in the countryside and works all day in an office that fills a couple of sixteenth-century cottages in the High Street of another tiny village. He enjoys traveling abroad to sketch historic buildings and ornamental details but visits London as infrequently as possible. With a strong Puritan streak, he eschews novels and the theater, his bedside reading including the Bible and the now neglected spiritual writings of the seventeenth-century Puritan divines. He goes to the village church on Sundays and is even a lay preacher. His religious faith enables him to be largely indifferent to the opinions of the fashionable world: herein lies the strength of his personality and the independence of his architecture. Indeed, he believes the classical orders emanate from the same divine design that orders the world. The one attack that wounds him is the attack by his former supporter, architecture critic Gavin Stamp, who has sarcastically dubbed him "God's architect."

Certainly, it took ample fortitude to withstand the setbacks of the 1960s. Typical was the tale that befell the imaginative plan that he and Raymond Erith, his master and subsequently his partner, designed in 1966–67 for Shottesbrooke, Berkshire. The commission came from Sir John Smith, a director of Coutts Bank, the Financial Times, and Rolls-Royce Ltd., as well as a passionate architectural amateur. Erith and Terry proposed a charming residential development in the form of a complete closed quadrangle of 12 single-story houses for the elderly, partly Georgian and partly castellated in style. Aligned on an avenue of lime trees in axis with the tower of the medieval parish church, they were to be built on land given by Sir John Smith at his own expense as a gift to the local authority. However, the county planning authorities rejected the scheme in 1968, partly because in the new modern secular world it was thought distressing for the old to look at a church and a graveyard.

Terry's career began slowly, with minor country buildings from the 1960s to the late 1970s. But thereafter the pattern changed dramatically, with commissions for country houses from the very rich, who were encouraged by the change in the political and financial climate introduced by Mrs. Thatcher. The turning point was the totally unexpected commission from Sir Thomas Pilkington for a substantial country house at Kings Walden Bury, Hertfordshire. Built



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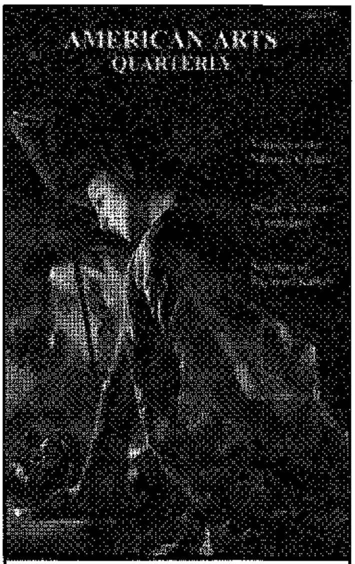

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between 1969 and 1973 from designs by Erith and Terry, this sumptuous, traditional mansion was eventually followed by commissions from Mrs. Thatcher herself, from the Crown, and from Cambridge University. Terry is now one of the busiest architects in England, even though leading knighted architects such as Sir Norman Foster and Sir Richard Rogers despise him.

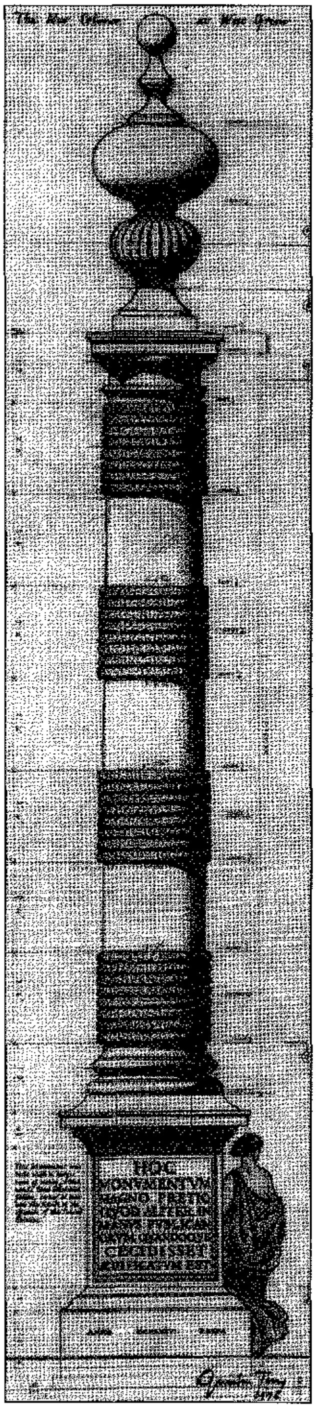
However, when Kings Walden Bury was commissioned, Erith and Terry feared it would be the last decent building erected in an age of barbarism—for it is impossible to exaggerate the extent to which in 1968 it was still widely believed in Britain that there was no alternative to modernism for a large building, or indeed for any building. The situation was different in America, where the modern movement's ideology had achieved a stranglehold only on urban design. Rich Americans were always able to build private buildings in traditional styles in the country. In England after 1945, the socialist stranglehold was two-sided, in that it condemned both traditional architectural styles and traditional wealth. Taxation, which remained at 98 percent on investment income until Mrs. Thatcher brought it down, prevented the rich from erecting private buildings in the classical—or indeed in any—style. In England, evidence about the flickering rebellious survival of traditional and classical architecture was suppressed, rather like free thought in Soviet Russia. In 1983 the *Architectural Review,* the leading British architectural journal, which reports on all significant new buildings, refused to publish Quinlan Terry's substantial Corinthian pavilion at Thenford, Northamptonshire, partly because it was classical, and (doubtless) partly because it was commissioned by a leading Conservative Member of Parliament, Michael Heseltine.

The history of this hatred of classicism and traditionalism in England has still to be written. A singular resistance to it was provided by the monumental column that Quinlan Terry built in 1976 at West Green House, Hampshire, for Lord McAlpine, director of the construction firm Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons Ltd. and deputy chairman of the Conservative Party from 1979 to 1983. Built at a time when the Labour government was imposing shockingly high tax rates, the column bears an inscription in Latin that can be translated as: "This monument was built with a large sum of money that would otherwise have fallen sooner or later into the hands of the tax-gatherers." To create a thing of beauty, functionally useless, was a nobler end for McAlpine's wealth than any use the government could find for it.

Since Kings Walden Bury, Terry has produced a remarkable chain of country houses in England and in the U.S. In the process, he has initiated a new Renaissance, in which he successfully reinvented the classical language of such architects as Palladio and Sanmicheli and the craftsmanship required to build such architecture. The mechanized technology of modern English architectural practice had destroyed all this inherited knowledge, and over the last two decades Terry recreated it, helping to train a whole new generation of young craftsmen in stone, timber, stucco, and iron.

The mounting prestige of his career can be measured by the commission he received in 1988 from Mrs. Thatcher, a friend and ally of Terry's patron, Lord McAlpine. This was the architectural enrichment of the three modest, rather dull state drawing rooms at No. 10, Downing Street, which date from the 1730s but had been altered over the years. Here the great traditionalist architect came face-to-face with the greatest traditionalist politician of the 1980s: Terry told me how Mrs. Thatcher had wanted the walls of these rooms to be hung with the portraits of "high achievers." The beautiful result has received virtually no publicity in England, such is the hostility of the architectural profession to Terry and, indeed, to Mrs. Thatcher.

The sensitivity to the historical environment that informed Terry's work on these rooms also informed his new junior common room building (1985–89) and Maitland Robinson Library (1990–92) at Downing College, Cambridge, a notable Greek Revival monument. In 1985 the Fellows of Downing were won over to Terry's cause, less because he chose classical forms than because they were convinced that his buildings would be solidly constructed so that they would not fall apart, as Stirling's ill-fated History Faculty did. In recognition of the extent to which his work was welcomed by the public as a whole, Terry was commissioned by the Crown Estate in 1987 to provide six villas in London's Regent's Park, to be added to those built by Nash in the 1820s. Terry has so far built three: the Ionic Villa, the Gothick Villa, and the Villa Veneto.



COURTESY ERITH & TERRY ARCHITECTS

Lord McAlpine's column

One cannot sufficiently emphasize what a solitary furrow Terry has plowed, how totally he was, and is, ridiculed by the architectural establishment. However, in the perspective of history, he will doubtless be seen as the single most influential British architect of the late twentieth century to pull the rug from beneath the false certainties of modernism. Terry demolished these brutal ideals most triumphantly at Richmond Riverside, which provides a model not only for incorporating new buildings into historic towns but also for enhancing any city, whether old or new. It remains one of the most challenging and inspirational models for urban redevelopment in the modern city. ●

Oh, to be in England

A Horror Story

Theodore Dalrymple

In the psychotherapeutic worldview to which all good liberals subscribe, there is no evil, only victimhood. The robber and the robbed, the murderer and the murdered, are alike the victims of circumstance, united by the events that overtook them. Future generations (I hope) will find it curious how, in the century of Stalin and Hitler, we have been so eager to deny man's capacity for evil. Every now and again, however, a case arises that stirs a faint memory of this capacity—forgotten soon afterward.

The case of Frederick and Rosemary West is an example of this phenomenon. It began with public levity, passed through a brief stage of appalled disgust, and is now principally a commercial opportunity for publishers and tour operators. But rightly considered, it reminds us of what men are capable, once all restraints are removed; and because the Wests' crimes were so much worse than can be explained by their personal circumstances, the case reminds us also of what should be obvious, but alas is not, that no conceivable perfection of society will ever render redundant all external restraints upon human conduct.

As soon as the police had dug up the first human remains in the backyard of Number 25, Cromwell Street, Gloucester, in February 1994, bookmakers all over the country started to take bets on how many bodies would eventually be found there. There is nothing that lifts English national morale as effectively as a really gruesome murder, and murders do not come any more gruesome than those that took place on Cromwell Street.

In the end, nine sets of human remains were uncovered at that address, including those of the daughter of the proud house-owners, Mr. Frederick and Mrs. Rosemary West (born in 1943 and 1953, respectively). The remains of their stepdaughter were found at their previous address, Number 25, Midland Road, Gloucester, while those of Mr. West's first wife, Rena, and those of one of his mistresses—pregnant at the time of her demise—were discovered in two fields near Mr. West's birthplace, the picturesquely named village of Much Marcle. As Agatha Christie once so perceptively remarked, there is a deal of wickedness in an English village.

Before he hanged himself on New Year's Day 1994, in Winson Green Prison, Birmingham, Mr. West confessed to a confidante—who has since been offered more than $150,000 to relay the confidences, as yet unpublished, to a newspaper—that he had killed at least 20 others. It is difficult, however, to place much credence in his confession, for Fred was never very good at figures and, according to members of his family, could never remember exactly how many children he had, or their names. I have heard a rumor that the true number of his victims was nearer to 60 than 20. Admittedly, the bearer of the rumor was a man with reason to be nervous: he was a doctor whose office extension had recently been completed by Fred, a small-time builder. Fred had obligingly offered to prepare the foundations for the extension while the doctor was away on vacation: a thoughtfulness that, in retrospect, may have been motivated by more than a mere desire to spare the doctor the noise that building works inevitably entail.

Another acquaintance of mine turned down Fred's offer to build him a conservatory: the builder's manner put him off. Indeed, there was something distinctly odd about the murderer's appearance: he looked like an intermediate stage in the transformation of man into werewolf. Extremely hirsute, he was short and had a limp from an early motorbike accident; he had the traditional bad teeth of the English working class, but his eyes glittered brightly, and there is no doubt that, despite his poor education, bucolic accent, and limited vocabulary, he was able to exert a hypnotic charm over susceptible and inexperienced young women.

Rosemary's appearance was rather more ordinary. She put

THE SUN/REX FEATURES

The Wests committed their murders both for practical reasons and for sexual gratification.

on weight early and looked matronly before her time. There was nothing in her face or bearing that suggested a voracious sexual appetite or uncontrolled sadism. While she was in prison awaiting trial, she looked every bit the fond grandmother who knitted socks for her grandchildren.

It is unlikely we shall ever know for certain how many lives Fred and Rose cut short: an entire county would have to be dug up, and since the relatively limited excavations so far undertaken by the police, comprising 200 square yards at most, have already cost $2.25 million, a really thorough investigation would bankrupt the nation. Whatever the true number of victims, the Gloucester of the Wests is now as firmly etched onto the national consciousness as the Whitechapel of Jack the Ripper. Rose's trial monopolized the attention of the public as O. J. Simpson's trial had done in America, though only through the medium of the press: cameras (quite rightly) not being allowed in British courtrooms, to preserve whatever little remains of the majesty of the law.

Gloucester is a small cathedral city of about 100,000, where the city council has conclusively demonstrated that with the right combination of 1960s urban planning and an undiscriminating welfare policy, the degraded inner city conditions of much larger conurbations may be successfully reproduced in small country towns. The ancient but decayed medieval city center has been replaced almost in its entirety by concrete buildings that would have gladdened the hearts of another famous couple, the Ceausescus. As for Cromwell Street itself, once decent and even elegant nineteenth-century housing has degenerated into near-slum, where a shifting population of drifters rent dismal rooms by the week, and everything looks uncared for: the paint peels off the woodwork, the stucco crumbles, and litter—the packaging of junk food—flutters in the breeze. On the end wall of another terrace of houses nearby, a muralist has depicted the glorious march of the British masses from unemployment during the Depression to single parenthood in the nineties, headed by a Rastafarian with dreadlocks who holds aloft a banner saying "Give Us a Future": by which is meant, according to the smaller banners held aloft behind him by the single mothers, more generous welfare payments. Next door to the Wests' house is a mean little Seventh-Day Adventist Church, whose noticeboard offers passersby "peace and sanity in a mad, mad world."

Number 25, Cromwell Street, does hold out promise of urban renewal, however. Some have suggested that it be turned into a memorial for the Wests' victims. Others, more commercial-minded, have suggested that it be made into a waxwork museum, which would undoubtedly transform it into one of the principal tourist attractions of these islands, stimulating the economy of Gloucester as a whole. Some idea of Cromwell Street's touristic potential can be gauged from the fact that, even two years after the first uncovering of the bodies there, a steady and never-ending stream of the curious passes the house: this despite the windows' having been filled in by cinder block, and the doors securely fastened against entry, so that there is nothing whatever to see. Local storekeepers are now so accustomed to the prurience of strangers that they direct them to Cromwell Street even before they have opened their mouths to ask the way.

The revelations during the recent trial of Mrs. West (she was found guilty on three counts of murder on November 21, and on a further seven the following day) were deemed so deeply shocking that even the British gutter press, no enemy to sensation or salaciousness, unanimously declined to print the grimmer details. The jurors were offered psychotherapy after the trial, and some of them may have accepted; the crime reporters present rejected a similar offer with contumely. This solicitousness on the part of the authorities for the emotional welfare of witnesses to the trial was in marked contrast to their previous indifference to the evidence that the Wests were murdering their way through a multitude, almost—but not quite—unmolested for a quarter of a century.

The Wests committed their murders both for practical reasons and for sexual gratification. At first, Fred killed alone. The dismembered body of his pregnant mistress, who was last seen alive in July 1967 (when Fred was 24), was discovered buried in a field in June 1994. As far as is known, she was the first person he had killed—apart from a three-year-old child whom he had, accidentally, run over in a van and crushed to death in Glasgow. He killed his mistress because his first wife, a prostitute and petty criminal from Glasgow, with whom he lived only intermittently, was becoming jealous.

He then killed, dismembered, and buried his first wife in 1970. By this time, he was living with Rosemary, who was 15 when they had first met at a bus stop. Her parents had been so alarmed by her liaison with a man ten years older than she (though her father had himself sexually abused her) that they delivered her up to the care of the local social services department, which, however, permitted her to continue to see Fred. Aged 16, she gave birth to their daughter, Heather, whom they were jointly to murder 16 years later.

In 1971, Rosemary West killed Charmaine, the eight-year-old daughter of Fred's first wife by an Indian bus driver in Glasgow, who lived with the Wests when she was not in the care of the local social services. Fred was then serving a prison sentence for minor property offenses. "Darling, about Char," Rosemary wrote to him in prison. "I think she likes to be handled rough. But darling, why do I have to be the one to do it. I would keep her for her own sake, if it wasn't for the rest of the children." The rest of the children, at that stage, were Fred's own daughter by his first wife (Charmaine's mother) and the Wests' first child.

When Charmaine no longer appeared at her school, the teachers and her friends (one of whom had witnessed Mrs. West beating her severely with a wooden spoon while her wrists were tied behind her back with a leather belt) were told that she had been taken away by her real mother—who by then had been decomposing for two years in a field. No further efforts to trace Charmaine were ever made: a child had simply vanished without trace.

25
Cromwell
St

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Fred and Rose were married in 1972, Fred describing himself in the marriage register as a bachelor. Soon thereafter, they first sexually assaulted Charmaine's half-sister, Anna Marie, then eight years old, Fred's daughter by his first wife. They took her down into the cellar, her hands already tied and her mouth gagged; Mrs. West sat on her face while Fred raped her. They told her that she should be grateful to have such caring parents and that it had all been for her own good. They kept her out of school for a few days and told her that if she informed anyone of what had happened, she would receive a severe beating. Thereafter, she was repeatedly and regularly strapped to a metal frame, erected in the cellar by Fred, so that his wife could indulge in lesbian sexual acts with her. At school, Anna Marie would often refuse to participate in sports, lest the injuries inflicted by her parents on her be revealed; but no one realized that anything was wrong or thought to intervene.

It was in late 1972 that Fred and Rose first abducted a young woman from the streets. The presence of a woman in the cruising car reassured their victims that nothing was amiss with the offered ride. Their first such victim was sexually assaulted in the car by Rose, then punched unconscious by Fred, then tied up in masking tape, then dragged into the cellar of Number 25, Cromwell Street, then further assaulted by Rose, then raped by Fred (while Rose was upstairs making a cup of tea for them all, a peculiarly English touch to the story), and finally released on condition—to which she assented—that she return in the near future for more. Instead, she went to the police.

The police convinced her that it would be better to charge the Wests with indecent assault rather than with kidnap and rape: that way, the Wests would plead guilty, and she would not have to make a traumatic appearance in court. In the event, the Wests were fined $75 each, a leniency of sentencing that even the most ardent of liberals would, I trust, find unfortunate in the light of subsequent events.

It was after their lucky escape that the Wests got down to some serious killing, deciding that if their sexual playmates were going to go to the police, it would be better to dispose of them altogether. They abducted a number of single girls—six at the very least—whom they sexually tortured, binding them up with masking tape (and, in one case, inserting plastic tubes into her nostrils so that she could continue to breathe—a technique they learned, most probably, from a pornographic magazine later found in their possession), finally killing, dismembering, and burying them in the cellar that was later used as their children's bedroom.

These were by no means the Wests' only activities. They took in lodgers, to many of whom Mrs. West, with her husband's active encouragement, made love, and some of whom heard the nocturnal screams of the tortured downstairs; they refrained from intervening, however, because they accepted the Wests' explanation that the screams arose from their daughter's nightmares. Occasionally, the police would raid Number 25 and would prosecute some of the lodgers for possession of small quantities of marijuana—an ironic attention to detail, under the circumstances.

The Wests also ran a brothel (patronized by the local police, according to rumor), in which Mrs. West was the sole prostitute. The Wests repeatedly placed advertisements in local magazines seeking W.E.—i.e., Well-Endowed—West Indian Males for Sex with Housewife. (Of Mrs. West's eventual eight children, only four were by Fred, and four by her clients, three of them being of mixed race.) Initially, Mrs. West entertained men only for pleasure, both her own and her husband's; but with so many mouths to feed, she soon turned professional. Fred enjoyed watching and listening to his wife at work, and installed an intercom system so that he could hear her wherever he happened to be in the house. He also installed spy holes and videotaped his wife on many occasions, later showing the films to his children on one of the seven video machines in the house (all of them stolen, for Fred was a petty thief as well as a mass murderer, with 11 convictions for theft). He also offered tapes of women being tortured to the local video store, but the store owner declined the offer and went to the police instead, who, anxious in the then-new permissive moral climate to demonstrate that they were as broad-minded as anybody, did nothing.

This was far from the only missed clue that something strange was going on at Cromwell Street. The Wests' sadistic treatment of their children led to 31 attendances at the emergency department of the local hospital, for conditions as disparate as peculiar puncture marks on the feet to female genital injuries allegedly caused by having to stop suddenly while riding a bicycle. One daughter, age 15, attended the hospital with an ectopic pregnancy (Fred was the father, of course), but although this meant that, legally speaking, a rape *must* have taken place, the age of consent being 16, no one thought to investigate further or even to ask the simple question as to who the father was: for to have done so would have been regarded as implicitly *judgmental.*

Rosemary was so angered by her son one day that she grabbed him round the throat and throttled him nearly to unconsciousness. There were bruises on his neck afterward—clearly finger marks—and the blood vessels had burst in the whites of his eyes; but when he was asked about these signs at school, he said that he came by them while playing in a tree with a rope around his neck, when he accidentally fell. This was regarded as a perfectly adequate and acceptable explanation. He regularly appeared in school covered in bruises.

The Wests switched from male to female lodgers. Mrs. West, being bisexual, found them as much fun to be with as men; and Mr. West (who, incidentally, had often boasted of his ability to perform abortions and may actually have performed a few) regarded them as more reliable payers of rent than casually employed males, especially if the girls were single, pregnant, and in receipt of welfare.

But most of the Wests' victims were picked up by the wayside. The majority of them—though not quite all—were rebellious and difficult teenagers from broken homes, who had either run away from home or had been in the care of the social services. One, however, was a university student of medieval English, the niece of the novelist Kingsley Amis, while another was the daughter of a well-to-do Swiss businessman, hitchhiking her way to Ireland. Extensive searches by the police failed to find them: there was nothing to connect them to the Wests.

More typical were the cases of Lynda Gough and Juanita Mott. Lynda was a rebellious and headstrong girl from Gloucester who suddenly left home, leaving behind a note for her parents: "Please don't worry about me. I have got a flat and will come and see you sometime."

Three Saturdays later, having heard nothing from her daughter, Mrs. Gough managed to trace her via her friends to Cromwell Street. By then, Lynda had been tortured, raped, cut up, and buried. Rosemary West came to the front door wearing Lynda's slippers; moreover, Mrs. Gough recognized her daughter's clothes hanging on the washing line. Mrs. West told Mrs. Gough that her daughter had departed for the seaside resort of Weston-super-Mare, leaving her belongings behind. After a further lapse of time, Mrs. Gough and her husband searched Weston for Lynda but of course did not find her. They sought the help of several organizations, including the Salvation Army, but never reported her as missing to the police. Thereafter, they made no further efforts to trace their daughter: perhaps they did not really care, or thought that their daughter, who had attended a school for the mentally backward, had the right and duty to make a life for herself, at the age of 19 (the age at which she disappeared), untrammeled by parental guidance.

Juanita Mott was the daughter of an American serviceman whose parents split up when she was very young. She left both school and home at age 15; three years later, having already lodged with the Wests earlier, she accepted a lift from them and was abducted by them, suspended from the beams in their cellar, and then murdered. She, too, was never reported as missing.

As the number of the West children grew, and as they matured, it became more difficult to conduct burials at home. The abuse of the older children, however, escalated, so that their son, then age 13, ran away from home and stayed for a while with friends. When he returned home, he was beaten and told that he would soon be old enough to have intercourse with his mother (the normal thing for a boy, his father told him). Heather, the eldest daughter, then age 16, vehemently rejected the advances of her father, and was told that this meant she was a lesbian. She was then tied up, raped, killed, and buried in the backyard rather than the cellar. The eldest son was asked to help with the digging, under the impression that it was for a fishpond. The Wests explained Heather's disappearance to the other children as her decision to work away at a holiday camp. She was the last person to be buried at 25 Cromwell Street, and her parents set up the family barbecue precisely over the site of her grave.

Five years later—and probably many murders later—the Wests were arrested for the rape of a 14-year-old girl. The court case collapsed because the girl ultimately refused to testify in public; but during the police investigation, an immense quantity of pornographic material, including 99 homemade videos, was found at Cromwell Street. The police destroyed the videos, apparently without ever having watched them; they may well have contained recordings of the murders.

The detective in charge of the investigation (who was later officially reprimanded when she tried to sell her story to a publisher for $1.5 million) had by now uncovered evidence of terrible abuse and wanted urgently to interview Heather. No one, however, knew her whereabouts, though one of the children had told a social worker that there was a family rumor that she was buried under the patio. The social worker did not think to inform the police; but in any case, the detective was by now highly suspicious. She attempted to convince her superiors that there was a good case for searching—indeed, excavating—the West house, but they procrastinated for more than a year, worried about the expense of it. Meanwhile, Fred had gone from Gloucester Prison, where he had been held on a charge of rape, to a bail hostel in Birmingham (where, he later boasted, he had killed a woman), to complete freedom after acquittal in court. It was not very long, however, before the game was over, this time for good.

After their final arrest, on February 25, 1994, the Wests chose different paths. Fred confessed—though only gradually and teasingly, with many different versions, no doubt to taunt the police—while Rosemary maintained a posture of injured innocence. When she was asked by the police why, if she were innocent, she had not reported her daughter as missing, she replied, "So I have to snitch on my own daughter now, do I?"—thus revealing that, for her, to resort to the help of the police when a 16-year-old daughter was missing was a form of betrayal, rather than the natural response of a worried mother.

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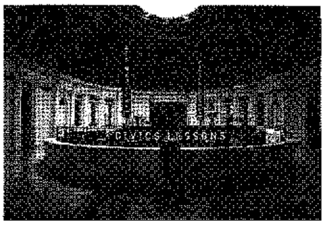

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Both the Wests showed a sentimental streak, however, confirming Jung's aphorism that sentimentality is a superstructure covering brutality. Fred was writing his memoirs at the time he hanged himself, which he entitled "I Was Loved by an Angel"; and he gave his son advice in his letters from prison, letters that incidentally throw a lurid light upon the level of education in England: "Working all day and night like I did . . . you cud end up in hear, all ways no What going on in your home pliase son all Ways spend as much time With your Wife and children as you can and love your Wife and children, there the most valuable thing you will ever have in your life so look after it son." His suicide note included the following suggestion for the epitaph on his tombstone, as if his death had brought to an end a modern version of *Romeo and Juliet*:

In loving memory
FRED WEST ROSE WEST
Rest in peace where
no shadow falls
In perfect peace he
waits for Rose, his wife

Rose, on the other hand, turned to poetry. From prison she wrote to her daughter, whom she had repeatedly beaten, raped, and abused:

I love you like the birds and bee's
I love you like the flower's sweet,
I love you like the deep blue sea's,
And memories dear to keep.

It was as if the pair of them believed that the utterance of a cloying sentiment or two could establish the purity of their hearts, irrespective of their actions.

Of course, speculation began at once in all the British newspapers as to what social and psychological forces might have molded this extraordinarily depraved couple. For example, both of them came from large and poor families in which violence was commonplace. But none of their siblings approached Fred or Rose in their ferocity or cruelty, even if some of Rose's brothers were petty criminals. Fred was brought up in a rural cottage without electricity; at the age of nine, he was required to slaughter animals. His brothers were raised in similar fashion, however, and they did not end up slaughtering humans. And if the so-called cycle of deprivation explained everything, or indeed anything, how are we to account for the strong moral sense their eldest and worst-abused children appear to have developed?

No doubt there have always been deeply perverted people, and it was a mischance that two of them such as the Wests should have found each other. But reflecting on their story, it is difficult not to conclude that their path was smoothed by the increasing uncertainty during the last three decades as to the line between acceptable and unacceptable conduct, or even whether such a line exists at all. Increasing sexual permissiveness was taken by the

Wests, whose libidos were a great deal stronger than their powers of reason, to entail a complete absence of limits; they told those whom they raped that what they were doing was only "natural" and therefore unobjectionable. And they operated in an atmosphere in which, increasingly, self-discipline was not accepted as a necessary condition of freedom—in which everyone's merest whim was law. Moreover, the majority of their victims were young people cast adrift without the guidance of adults, of whom they believed themselves to have no need, and of whom they were in any case highly intolerant.

The West case revealed how easily, in the anonymity of the modern urban environment, and in the midst of crowds, people may disappear; and how such disappearances are made all the easier by a collective refusal—in the name of individual liberty—of parents to take responsibility for their children, of neighbors to notice what is happening around them, of anyone to brave the mockery of libertines in the defense of some standard of decency. And the various public agencies—the police, the schools, the social services, the hospitals—proved no substitute for the personal concern that families were once supposed to have provided, but that, in a permissive climate in which tolerance all too often shades into indifference, many provide no longer. The failure of these agencies was not accidental, but inherent in their nature as bureaucracies: the state is not, and never will be, a substitute for an old-fashioned Mum and Dad.

I meet adolescents each day in my hospital whose conduct renders them vulnerable to any Wests who might present themselves. These adolescents think they are streetwise, but if so, they are streetwise, life foolish. Last week, for example, I spoke to the 14-year-old daughter of Indian parents, who had repeatedly run away from home because her parents insisted that she go out not more than one evening a week and return by ten at night.

"I want them to be like an English family," she said to me.

"And what is an English family like?" I asked.

"They look after you till you're 16," she replied. "Then you find a flat on your own."

I sincerely hope she never meets her West: for were she ever to do so, no one would come to her rescue. All that is necessary for evil to triumph, said Burke, is for good men to do nothing; and most good men nowadays can be relied upon to do precisely that. Where a reputation for intolerance is more feared than a reputation for vice itself, all manner of evil may be expected to flourish. ●

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Letters

Bah, "Humbug"

To the editor:
The strong political bias of your publication is clear. You are, of course, entitled to promote a particular political and social ideology. And you do. So it is with some sense of futility that I write to express the sorrow and dismay I felt upon reading Heather Mac Donald's absurd caricature of the work of a group of feminist and critical race theory scholars ["Law School Humbug," Autumn 1995].

"Law School Humbug" is such an extreme example of an absence of balance and fair-mindedness that I feel compelled to protest. The article reflected an utter inability (or staunch refusal) to comprehend the rich and complex body of work that it ridiculed. Working from the astounding pretense that feminist and critical race scholarship is now dominant in the legal academy, the article cruelly undercut some of the most humane, most intellectually sophisticated, and most devoted teachers and scholars I have known.

Of course, these people are not dominant in the legal academy. They are (in several significant respects) minority voices seeking a pluralism grounded in mutual respect and understanding. They are vulnerable, and Ms. Mac Donald's words have done them harm. More importantly, her words have made more difficult the already astoundingly difficult task of teaching developing lawyers to function responsibly in the face of what virtually every legal scholar since the early decades of this nearly elapsed century has recognized to be our challenge: a measure of indeterminacy that is not unlimited, but deeply significant.

Peggy C. Davis
Professor of Law
New York University
New York, N.Y.

To the editor:
I wish to concur fully in my colleague Professor Peggy C. Davis's letter. Careful criticism is one thing; condemnation based on false facts and innuendo is another. Ms. Mac Donald's article was mostly the latter, and, as perhaps was intended, it has caused great personal hurt to those attacked in it and undermined the career possibilities of younger members who must still face the obstacles of the tenure process.

I am often deemed the "father of critical race theory." It is an honor that I don't deserve but that I carry proudly. The writings of many young minority teachers have provided a heretofore unrecognized perspective on the law and the society it serves. This writing is varied in its approach, content, and emphasis. But those who are pioneering in this area are honest and courageous individuals who observe a far more objective and honest critique than in Ms. Mac Donald's "Humbug" piece.

In addition, I have known some of the individuals whose classroom comments were set out in the article, and I know for a fact that some of the statements attributed to them were either grossly false or yanked out of context. A number of these teachers are my former students and now my friends. They are some of the most caring and humane people I know, and certainly are far more sensitive to students' views and feelings than many of their majority-race colleagues. This article has done them a great disservice.

Derrick Bell
Visiting Professor of Law
New York University
New York, N.Y.

Heather Mac Donald responds:
Professors Davis and Bell fail to refute my characterizations of the tenets and methods of critical race and feminist legal theory. Do feminist scholars *not* hold that law is a male construct designed to silence the oppressed? Do critical race scholars such as Professor Bell *not* argue that American society is so ineradicably racist that even its civil rights laws aim to keep blacks down? And is the introduction of subjective anecdotes into legal scholarship *not* a proud achievement of both feminist and critical race theorists? I would welcome evidence to the contrary; Professors Bell and Davis have not provided it.

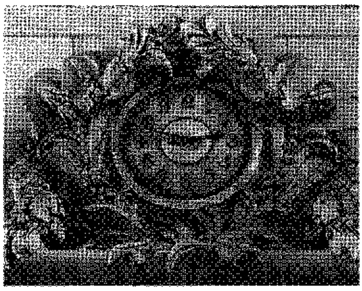
The practitioners of critical race and feminist legal theories may well be humane and caring people. The only issue for the public, however, is the possible effect of their scholarship on law and society. Until shown otherwise, I will continue to maintain that the majority of this new scholarship is trivial at best, dangerously divisive at worst.

Drive to Succeed

To the editor:
I read with considerable interest Howard Husock's article on community vans ["Enterprising Van Drivers Collide with Regulation," Winter 1996]. Clearly, vans are more economical than city buses in most parts of the city for most parts of the day. Yet in all the discussions of the recent fare increases, no one mentioned just how costly the buses are. The gross operating subsidy for the buses approaches $600 million per year, almost equal to the subsidy for the subways, which carry two and a half times as many riders.

Maintenance costs are much higher for buses than are comparable costs for the private van fleet, in part because of the limited production run of spare parts for buses and in part because of the poor condition of city streets. New York City buses experience twice as much wear and tear as buses in other cities; vans, in contrast, can alter their routes to avoid the worst-maintained streets. The city's efforts to regulate vans, like its efforts to license other trades, seem to aim at protecting the income of those already employed. As Mr. Husock points out, New York City will surely suffer economically when its government thwarts the drive in the marketplace for the lowest-cost solutions to transportation needs.

Frank McArdle
New York, N.Y.


ANDREW BORDWIN

Beyond Left and Right

To the editor:
As a regular reader, I was finally provoked by your Winter 1996 issue to challenge you to broaden your magazine's political perspective.

Issue after issue, you present articles suggesting that there are only "conservative" lessons to be learned from efforts to improve urban life. But both David Watkin's article ["It's Back to the Future in the Heart of London"] and David Garrard Lowe's article ["Urban Lessons from Paris"] reveal a more complex reality. Was it not, after all, the power of "government" (albeit in the form of the Prince of Wales) that sustained the vision described by Mr. Watkin? And is not Paris a city that benefits from enormous investment by its national government?

The Harlem Diarist by Kathryn Wylde ["Doing the Right Thing"] brilliantly shows that smart urban development is a matter of what gets done, not who does it (public or private sector) or whether it is ideologically "conservative" or "liberal." Boldness, imagination, creativity, a can-do spirit, a passion for solving problems, and a commitment to help all the citizens of a metropolis, particularly the disadvantaged, are crucial elements monopolized by no political persuasion. The best solutions to urban problems, even short-term ones, are generally triumphs of pragmatism, not philosophy.

Most of us learned long ago to question the sacred cows of both left and right. Rome not only was not built in a day, it was not built by conservatives or liberals alone. In a journal admirably diverse in its choice of subjects, how about a measure of political diversity?

Michael E. Clark
Woodmere, N.Y.

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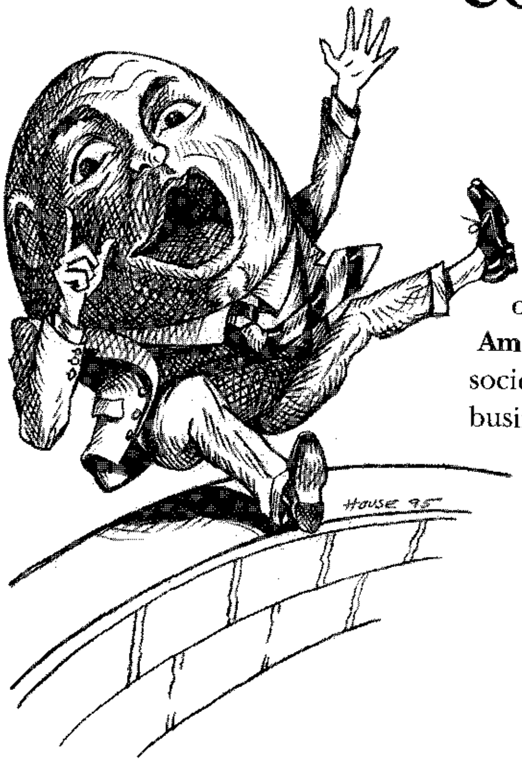

America's problems will be solved by its people, not its politicians. The central challenge for conservatives over the next 20 years is to restore the tradition of **American Citizenship** by repairing the institutions of civil society—families, communities, churches, volunteer groups, businesses, schools, local governments.

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Contributors

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Kay S. Hymowitz, a *City Journal* contributing editor, has written about children and education for *The New Republic*, *Dissent*, the *New York Times*, and *Newsday*.

Erin Isikoff teaches English literature at Columbia University. She writes and lectures about aesthetics and politics.

Rita Kramer is a contributing editor of *City Journal* and author of numerous books, including *At a Tender Age: Violent Youths and Juvenile Justice*. She has written for the *Wall Street Journal*, *Commentary*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and *The Wilson Quarterly*.

Heather Mac Donald is a contributing editor of *City Journal*. Her articles have also appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, *The New Republic*, and *The New Criterion*.

Roger Scruton is a writer and philosopher who lives in England. His books include *Modern Philosophy*, *Sexual Desire*, *The Aesthetics of Architecture*, *A Dove Descending and Other Stories*, and *Xanthippic Dialogues*. He is a regular contributor to the London *Times* and editor of *The Salisbury Review*.

Kenneth Silber writes about politics and economics. His articles have appeared in *City Journal*, *Commentary*, the *Washington Times*, *Insight*, *Reason*, and other publications.

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The Medici Princess by Joseph Cornell appeared in the Winter 1996 issue of *City Journal* courtesy of the Agnes Gund Collection.

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Juror Dismissed

Erin Isikoff

The summons to serve my city as a Criminal Court juror offered an address on Centre Street but did not indicate whether to use the City Hall or Canal Street subway stop. The pouring rain made my decision one of import. I chose City Hall and so walked six wet blocks instead of one. The door the summons indicated, the south entrance, was locked. I retraced my steps to the north entrance.

Though I was called for 8:30 AM, jury duty looked far from beginning. I discovered that 8:30 was a feint. The system plans for tardiness, and thus generates it.

At shortly after 9, and well before many people had arrived, the jury clerk started the video, meant to uplift our spirits, I suppose. A judge invoked and intoned, but I was not bedazzled by the notion of good government at work: I could not believe any of the people so obviously reading cue cards. The most absurd line of a completely absurd film was one juror's testimonial: "I can't explain it to you. It's something you have to experience for yourself." What was this, an advertisement for a car? The video's purpose was to explain; if it couldn't, it was another waste of our tax dollars.

Finally we entered a courtroom. Her Honor was very bitchy. Every juror (this is New York City, after all) had a story and an excuse. One guy I pitied: some ad exec who was supposed to lead a corporate retreat the next week. But he couldn't defer because he had done so five times. "Tough," the judge said, "that's why they call it jury *duty*."

The only time this judge restrained herself was when I thought she should have let loose. One guy on the panel was either drunk or incoherent or both. He said he didn't do anything and couldn't say whom he lived with or what they did. Questioning this guy was a complete waste of all our time, but the judge went on and on. When she asked him if he had ever been the victim of a crime, he said yes. When she asked him if he reported it, he said: "They took care of it in the neighborhood." Everyone but the judge laughed. Still, she didn't reprimand him for taking the law into his own hands. In this court, unqualified miscreants get the velvet glove, and yuppies the iron fist.

In my case, the judge's personality and the two-week guesstimate for the trial were all I needed to make my decision: evacuate the premises as soon as possible. Yet something made me refrain from admitting that I don't consider indicted people innocent until proven guilty and that I do think the defense attorney has a burden of proof. Somehow, I kept my mouth shut. A sort of civic pressure, a political correctness of the courtroom, drove me to conceal my prejudice.

The lawyers interrogated us after the judge was through. I hated being evaluated by the key players as a possible tool in the battle they were waging. When my turn came, my escape plan crystallized. With steely determination, I told the defense lawyer the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I found it highly "far-fetched" that police officers would lie on the stand about his client. We know why she might lie, but why would they? I'm very "pro-police," I didn't hesitate to tell him, very "let's crack down on crimes just like the one your client allegedly committed." Juror dismissed.

I don't feel ashamed about this, because I got recused for telling the truth, not for lying. I never expected it to be *that* sort of scam. Everyone with an opinion, every skeptic, every honest person, every talkative person, every self-indulgent person was outta there. I am all of these. In the elevator back to the central jury room, one woman told me she enjoyed my "performance." She said: "There's always a way to work it." She really missed the point. I didn't have to lie to get dismissed; all I had to do was to be brave enough to tell my truth.

I left with disgust for the whole adventure. Juries should be made of people who know victims and their sufferings, who think crime is horrendous, even objectionable, and who honor the police. Our system is set up to weed me out just where it needs me. ●

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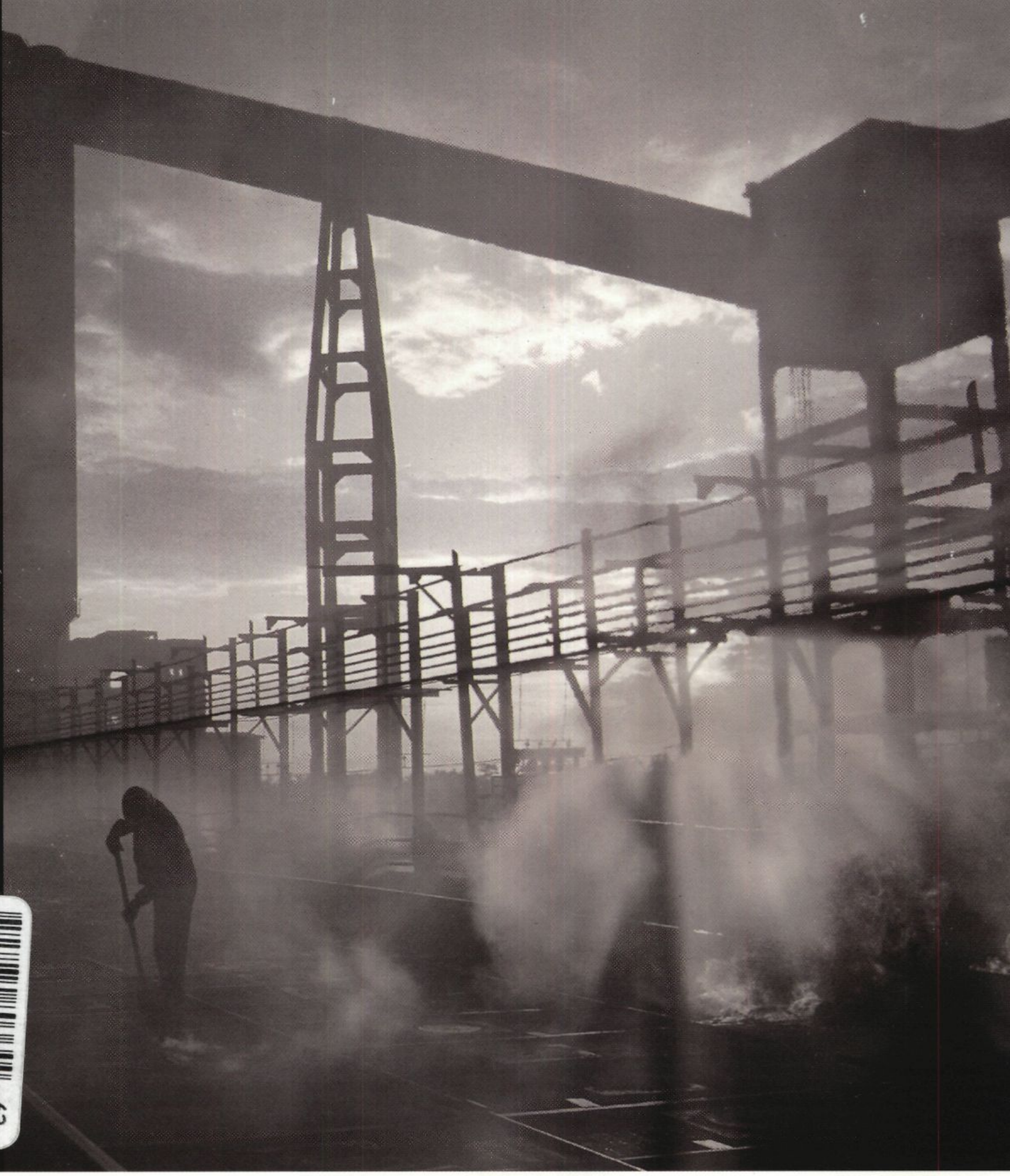

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